University of Alberta

Divinely Led: A Study of Plato's *Euthyphro*

by

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Abstract

In Plato's *Euthyphro* Socrates and Euthyphro seek to discover the *idea* of 'the pious'. Socrates' ostensible reason for undertaking the conversation is to learn the divine things from the 'expert' Euthyphro, so that he might free himself from the charges laid against him by Meletus. Not incidentally, the search has the additional effect of making Euthyphro's strange prosecution of his father dependent upon his 'wisdom' about piety. Because the dialogue is aporetic, Euthyphro's wisdom (and by extension his prosecution) are called into question. But despite the fact that the discussion ends at an impasse and we do not learn what 'the pious' is, we nonetheless learn something about the question of piety. The dialogue introduces the reader to the psychology of the pious man (including what Socrates characterizes as the 'commercial' root of sacrifice), to the relationship between piety and justice, and to alternative approaches to questions concerning 'divine things'.

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An Introduction to Plato's *Euthyphro*

The man for whom Plato's *Euthyphro* is named is a bizarre, strangely disturbing character. He fits naturally into a class of men whom we might typically refer to as 'fanatics' or 'zealots', for his dogmatic convictions concerning the nature of piety run deep. Indeed, so deep that he is willing to prosecute even his own father for 'murder' on behalf of a stranger—who was himself a murderer. And while in other times, Euthyphro's character may have effectively called into question prevailing prejudices about piety, today, *any* critique of piety is more likely to flatter our opinions. That is, the character of Euthyphro's piety stands opposed to modern tastes; one might even say that we hold the opposite prejudice—the prejudice *against* piety. Religion is not a part of our civic life—we are suspicious of it, and consequently of all 'believers' who want to impress their pious prescriptions upon the 'rest of us' (most notably we, in the West, are suspicious of 'believers' who populate our government, and of regimes who place a great emphasis on religion). Accordingly, it is very easy for us to dismiss Euthyphro as unworthy of serious consideration, as deplorable, despicable even. And there are good reasons for doing so. And yet, despite the fact that the Socratic attitude would seem to be at the bottom of our prejudice against piety (Socrates was a *philosopher*—and therefore free from the shackles of dogmatic faith!), we cannot lose sight of the fact that Plato did dedicate an entire dialogue to the topic of piety; he seemed to think that the issue was worthy of attention.

Plato, like us, was aware of the dangers of piety—Euthyphro would appear to be a manifestation of that awareness. And yet, while we see that Socrates himself

practically rejected the life of faith, he did not reject a political model that was supported by civic piety. As a result, the *Euthyphro* recommends itself as a dialogue worthy of serious study because it invites us to consider Socrates' strange support of a political regime that would seem to be unfriendly, if not outright hostile, to his way of life. Plato, then, indirectly encourages us to take up the pious, to give these questions due regard and to suspend our judgment until the phenomenon presents itself more fully to us.

The dialogue, however, is not simply a consideration of the political effects of piety. Despite the fact that—or perhaps because—it ends in an impasse, it leaves open the possibility that there is indeed an *idea* of the pious, possibly even a virtue so-called. To discount this possibility without first fully exploring it would be imprudent, for the question of piety is one that has grave consequences for one's life, and ultimately, one's soul. Accordingly, the dialogue does not solely concern itself with Euthyphro's strange prosecution and exaggerated claims to wisdom, or with the dangers of Euthyphro's particular conception of piety. Although we will argue that Socrates' conversation with Euthyphro is a manifestation of his attempt to reform the wrong-minded views of a fellow citizen, it is also a manifestation of Socrates' openness to the possibility of learning from other men. Plato has Socrates say at the close of the dialogue that had he learned the things pious and become wise in divine matters from Euthyphro, he would have learned to *live better* for the rest of his life. The question of piety, then, presents itself as a choice between different kinds of lives: the life led by Reason and the life led by Revelation. And while we might assume that because we 'know' Socrates' ultimate choice on the

matter, we can reasonably reject the life led by Revelation without question, our knowledge of Socrates' choice by no means reflects knowledge about why or how that choice was made. In taking the superiority of Socrates' life as self-evident—before we attempt to understand the reasons for which it was chosen—we have done nothing but inherit a blind prejudice.

Moreover, we have made the assumption that Socrates is the mouthpiece for Plato, an assumption that may inhibit a deeper understanding of Plato's dialogues. As Leo Strauss points out,

> Plato conceals his opinions. We may draw the further conclusion that the Platonic dialogues are dramas, if dramas in prose. They must then be read like dramas. We cannot ascribe to Plato any utterance of any of his characters without having taken great precautions. To illustrate this by example, in order to know what Shakespeare, in contradistinction to his MacBeth, thinks about life, one must consider MacBeth's utterance in the light of the play as a whole; we might thus find that according to the play as a whole, life is not senseless simply, but becomes senseless for him who violates the sacred law of life, or the sacred order restores itself, or the violation of the law of life is self-destructive; but since that self-destruction is exhibited in the case of MacBeth, a human being of a particular kind, one would have to wonder whether the apparent lesson of the play is true of all men or universally…[1]

Plato himself stated that to commit to the page one's own doctrines can only become a source of remorse. He wrote in his second epistle,

> The best precaution is not to write them down, but to commit them to memory; for it is impossible that things written should not become known to others. That is why I have never written on these subjects. There is no writing of Plato's, nor will there ever be; those that are now called so come from an idealized and youthful Socrates.[2]

We must, therefore, be cautious in assuming that Socrates' choice of life is representative of Plato's final thoughts on the question of piety.

In light of these introductory comments, it might prove useful to provide a brief account of our interpretive approach. And arguably, the best place to begin is with the Platonic Socrates' critique of writing. In Plato's *Phaedrus,* we are given an

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[1] Strauss, *The City and Man,* 59
[2] 314a-c

account of the specific limitations of writing: its tendency to weaken the memory, its inability to respond to questions, to tailor its speech to diverse members of an audience, and to prevent feigned wisdom (274b-278d). And yet, despite these criticisms, Plato continued to write. Leo Strauss offers insight into this apparent contradiction:

> [Plato's Socrates] says that writing is an invention of doubtful value. He thus makes us understand why he abstained from writing speeches or books. But Plato wrote dialogues. We may assume that the Platonic dialogue is a kind of writing which is free from the essential defect of writings. Writings are essentially defective because they are equally accessible to all who can read or because they do not know to whom to talk and to whom to be silent or because they say the same things to every one. We may conclude that the Platonic dialogue says different things to different people, or that it is radically ironical. The Platonic dialogue, if properly read, reveals itself to possess the flexibility or adaptability of oral communication. What it means to read a good writing properly is intimated by Socrates in the *Phaedrus* when he describes the character of good writing. A writing is good if it complies with 'logographic necessity', with the necessity which ought to govern the writings of speeches: every part of the written speech must be necessary for the whole; the place where each part occurs is the place where it is necessary that it should occur; in a word, good writing must resemble the healthy animal which can do its proper work well. The proper work of writing is to talk to some readers and be silent to others. [3]

In accepting these hermeneutic principles, the reader must thereby accept the task of attempting to understand each word and its place within the whole of the dialogue, that whole being a manifestation of 'logographic necessity'. And while the goal is first to understand Plato as he understood himself ('the only conceivable standard of correct interpretation'[4]), there is a second, more fundamental goal: that of learning how to think philosophically one's self, and of discerning whether or not the author's account reflects accurately upon the question posed or the phenomenon under investigation. Of course, in many ways, the two goals fit together. Once one has acknowledged that Plato saw further and deeper into questions of importance

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[3] Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (New York: Rand McNally, 1964: reprinted Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) 52-53.
[4] Leon H. Craig, *The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) xxxiv

(why else would one read his texts?), one cannot help but assume that 'one will be able to go further, faster, exploring the questions in his company than one possibly could on one's own'.[5] Leon Craig makes the observation that:

> [The Platonic dialogue] does not weaken the memory, but rather strengthens it, as it does all other powers of the rational soul. The serious study of a dialogue enhances acuity of observation, exercises one's imagination, expands curiosity, hones analytic skills, matures judgment, and cultivates one's sense of humor. But it also arouses the spirit and invokes the passions, allowing one to better understand them and their relationship to reason, in order that their energy may be harnessed and their unruliness subdued. But most important of all, arriving at an adequate interpretation of a dialogue requires one to think synoptically, synthesizing disparate evidence into a single coherent vision of the whole. And synthetic thought is the *sine qua non* of political philosophy. Thus one may say that the problem of interpreting a Platonic dialogue replicates the problem of understanding the world, requiring the same sets of powers in their same order of importance.[6]

The present study, then, is undertaken with one end in mind: to learn something about the question of piety with Plato as our teacher. The fact that Plato, a serious thinker, differs—possibly even disagrees with us on a question that pertains to how one ought to live one's life, and further pertains to how a political regime ought to be arranged, is enough to encourage us to take seriously our own opinions on the matter. Ideally, we will be further encouraged to consider them in light of plausible alternatives. And if the result of our study is that we neither affirm our opinions nor deny them, we may at least come to the realization that the questions surrounding 'the pious' are permanent questions.

The Place of *Euthyphro* in Plato's Dialogues

Traditionally the chronological sequencing of Plato's dialogues is based on assessments of style and form or content, although in all cases there is little aid available for dating the dialogues either through external sources or sources internal

[5] *ibid*, xxxvii
[6] *ibid*, xxvi.

to the dialogues themselves. Those who have relied primarily on content as a means of dating the dialogues have attempted to 'map' Plato's philosophic development, a task that assumes a comprehensive understanding of Plato's thought. Accordingly, chronologies are apt to differ, sometimes quite widely. Far more common today is the approach that relies on stylistic method as a means of identifying the chronological sequence of dialogues.[7] And while the choice to emphasize form and style over content also leads to divergence on the dating of each work, most commentators and scholars agree on the approximate period of *Euthyphro.* It is generally accepted that *Euthyphro* belongs to the early period of dialogues because of its simplicity of form, and some even conjecture that it is the first of Plato's writings on Socrates.[8]

The Place of *Euthyphro* in Socrates' Life

Despite the fact that it is generally accepted that *Euthyphro* belongs to the early period of Plato's writing, the dramatic setting of the dialogue establishes its place near the end of Socrates' life. In terms of the narrative of Socrates' life, this dialogue belongs after the charges but before the trial at which he was condemned to death. Most scholars agree that the dialogue belongs dramatically between *Theaetaetus* and *Apology of Socrates,* because at the close of *Theaetaetus* we see Socrates leave for the Porch of the King (the setting for *Euthyphro*), intent on

[7] Brandwood, Leonard, *The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 1-2.
[8] Allen, R.E., *Plato's Euthyphro and the Earlier Theory of Forms,* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) 1.

addressing the charges of Meletus. I will not be referring to *Theaetaetus* throughout the commentary, though I will at times make reference to *Apology of Socrates*.

Many scholars have noted a connection between *Euthyphro* and *Apology of Socrates*, and some have attempted to make the case for *Euthyphro* being the actual apology of Socrates to the Athenians, meaning that it serves as his real defense against the charges of impiety.[9] While the charge of impiety is discussed in the dialogue and the question of Socrates' alleged impiety looms large, I do not believe that there is adequate evidence to support this view. First of all, Socrates' interest in the pious is not necessarily undertaken from the stand-point of the city's conception of piety. The dialogue leaves open the question of whether there is a higher kind of piety, and one that might very well be at odds with the piety of the city. Secondly, and related, the conversation ends in an impasse: Socrates and Euthyphro do not find the form of the pious that they had set out to discover. Consequently, we may learn a partial truth about piety, but a fair judgment concerning the question of Socrates' impiety would involve a comprehensive understanding of the pious. Thirdly, this dialogue makes no mention of those earlier charges that Socrates so emphasizes in *Apology*: "Socrates does injustice and is meddlesome, by investigating the things under the earth and the heavenly things, and by making the weaker speech the stronger, and by teaching others these same things"—consequently *Euthyphro* does not offer a complete representation of Socrates' alleged impiety.

Lastly, and most relevant to our current discussion is that despite the fact that both *Euthyphro* and *Apology of Socrates* deal with the question of Socrates'

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[9] Adam, J, *Plato's Euthyphro*, Cambridge, 1890.

impiety, the descriptions of the charges are substantially qualified by the audience to whom they are delivered, the particular setting, and so on. That is, the drama is radically fictitious. Accordingly, 'everything which would be accidental outside of the dialogue becomes meaningful within the dialogue'.[10] For example, the very fact that Plato has chosen to write about a conversation concerning piety in a particular setting (the Porch of the King) with a particular man (Euthyphro), has a great impact on the character of the speeches. Part of the reader's task, then, is to strive to understand the speeches in light of the conditions under which they take place, including measuring the impact of the particular interlocutors as well as the impact of Socrates' particular end. As Strauss says,

> ...we must understand the "speeches" of all Platonic characters in light of the "deeds". The "deeds" are in the first place the setting and the action of the individual dialogue: on what kind of men does Socrates act with his speeches? what is the age, the character, the abilities, the position in society. And the appearance of each? when and where does the action take place? does Socrates achieve what he intends? is his action voluntary or imposed on him? Perhaps Socrates does not primarily intend to teach a doctrine but rather to educate human beings—to make them better, more just or gentle, more aware of their limitations. For before men can genuinely listen to a teaching, they must be willing to do so; they must have become aware of their need to listen; they must be liberated from the charms that make them obtuse...[11]

Rather than weaving together an interpretation that pertains to both dialogues, my reasons for making occasional reference to *Apology of Socrates* will be to highlight contradictions and similarities between the two dialogues which I find to be both relevant and curious, and to provide further details of Socrates' particular case in light of which the brevity of his account of the trial (in *Euthyphro)* can be better understood.

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[10] Strauss, *The City and Man,* 60.
[11] Strauss, *The City and Man,* 59-60

Dramatic Structure

Although *Euthyphro*, and indeed any dialogue, can be variously 'carved' into parts, I have sought to divide it according to its significant themes and what I perceive to be discrete shifts in the conversation, new beginnings in a sense. Most obviously, the dialogue is divided into two main parts: the introduction that leads up to the question, 'what is the pious' and the attempts at defining the pious that follow. Although the rather lengthy introduction appears unified in that it deals primarily with what seems to be one subject matter—both Socrates' and Euthyphro's trials—I further divide this part into two. The first sub-part then deals with Socrates' trial, the second with Euthyphro's prosecution of his father. The second half of the dialogue, then, consists of the various attempts at defining the pious and impious things.[12] I also divide this final portion of the dialogue into two parts; thus the parts are in total four. Before the third definition is proposed, Socrates solicits Euthyphro to 'say again from the beginning what ever the pious is…' (11b3-4) thus marking a new beginning in the conversation, and (to my mind) a further division of the second half of the dialogue.

The Dramatic Setting and the Characters

The first line of the *Euthyphro* is spoken by the man who is to be Socrates' single interlocutor for the entirety of the dialogue, the man after whom the dialogue is named. 'Euthyphro' means 'right-minded,' or 'straight-thought', doubtless

[12] This second half can be further broken down into four definitions: the pious is what is loved by the gods, the pious is what is loved by all gods, the pious is the tendance of the gods, and the pious is the art of sacrifice and prayer. The second and fourth definitions are qualifications of the first and third definitions respectively.

reflecting Plato's own sense of irony, for in the minds of his fellow citizens, Euthyphro is anything but right-minded. And while the irony of Euthyphro's name might seem to be a consequence of chance, the fact that Euthyphro is more or less based on an historical person does not change the fact that Plato did *choose* someone so-named for this conversation.

While what is known of Euthyphro's life from external sources is limited, the dialogue itself furnishes some biographical details. We know that he is regarded as a *mantis*, or diviner/prophet, who is willing to speak at Assembly, but who is often ignored (3c1-3). We also know that he spent time farming on Naxos with his father, a seemingly superfluous detail that will become significant for interpreting Euthyphro's case, and in turn for understanding his psyche (4c5).

The location of Euthyphro's farming is important because Naxos was known for its cleruchy: a group of five hundred colonists sent to the island by Athens at the instigation of Pericles I, in 447. Acting as buffers to prevent uprisings in conquered or rebellious territory, cleruchs were settlers who farmed the land.[13] As Thomas West points out in his translation of *Euthyphro,* this is an odd detail because Naxos was a colony of Athens only until she lost the Peloponnesian War in 404, five years before the dramatic date of this dialogue, 399.[14] We do not know for sure that Euthyphro's father belonged to this cleruchy, but given the reason for its arrangement, it is unlikely that he just happened to own land there previously. If he was a cleruch, he would have abandoned Naxos at the end of the war, and so the murder for which Euthyphro intends to indict him would have taken place at least

[13] Nails, Debra, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics,* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc, 2002) p.152
[14] West, "Euthyphro" in *Four Texts in Socrates,* p.44, fn 15

five years prior to this date. His delayed prosecution only adds to what is already a very strange, very perplexing prosecution.

We also know that Euthyphro is old enough to speak at Assembly (3c1-3), but that he is younger than Socrates (12a4-5; Socrates is seventy years old; *Apology,* 17d). Euthyphro's exact age is unknown, but if he is the same Euthyphro as the man mentioned in *Cratylus,* who was approximately twenty years old at the time of that dialogue (dramatically dated around 422), he would be near forty in this dialogue, which would put his father in his seventies.[15] Whether this is indeed the same man is difficult to say for certain, but the fact that both men are diviners, and both display 'expertise 'in father-gods: Uranus, Cronos, and Zeus (*Cra.* 396d; *Euthyphro.* 5e) lends credence to this view.

At the opening of the dialogue, the two men are, we assume, alone on the steps of the Porch of the King, an assumption based on the fact that no one else speaks nor does either speaker in any way imply others are present. We should be cautious about this inference because the dialogue is performed rather than narrated, and so it would 'theoretically' be possible that others have stopped to listen or have overheard the conversation but are unnamed because they neither speak nor are noticed. And the conversation, though seeming quite private, does not take place in a secluded setting. The Porch of the King is public and open to all citizens, indeed it is located in the market place. Given, however, that even silent participants in a Platonic dialogue can be of great dramatic importance, we must assume that Plato would have somehow indicated the presence of any additional characters.[16] For the

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[15] *ibid.* 152

[16] Consider, for example, the silent presence of both Niceratus and Lysias in *Republic.*

purposes of our commentary, then, we shall assume that the two men are conversing alone.

We must also presume that the conversation is such as Socrates deems appropriate to have with a man who knows enough about him to see that he is out of place here ("What is new, Socrates, that you have left the places in the Lyceum where you usually spend your time?"), but not enough about him to know that he has been charged with a capital crime. So, this is a semi-private conversation with a man that Socrates is somewhat familiar with, but not close to. And it is spontaneous—that is, it is not planned: Socrates has not sought Euthyphro out, nor, likewise has Euthyphro sought Socrates out. Their meeting is apparently one of chance.

Final Note on Interpretation and the Dialogue

We should note that the dialogue is not narrated, but 'performed', and so we are not privy to the private thoughts or reflections of Socrates, nor is the action subjected to narrative observations by a man recounting a story. The dialogue is dramatic and allows us to observe directly this conversation between Socrates and his fellow Athenian about piety. The teaching of the dialogue, which is more dialectical than it is doctrinal, *includes* the fact that the two men are unsuccessful in their attempts to properly define the pious. The dialogue is aporetic. Accordingly, we are never told anything purporting to be the full truth about piety, though this is not to say that we do not learn quite a lot about the *problem* of piety. This commentary will seek to trace out what might be provisionally concluded about

piety, attempting to illuminate both the particular aspects of piety that are focused on, those that are implied, and perhaps even that which is conspicuous by its absence.

1. Socrates' Trial (2a1-3e6)

(i) At the Porch of the King (2a1-2b1)

Initially the conversation is one of polite inquiry. Euthyphro is curious about Socrates' presence in such an unlikely place, and asks him 'What is new, Socrates, that you have left the places in Lyceum[17] where you usually spend your time and are now spending time here around the Porch of the King?'[18] Based on what he knows of Socrates, Euthyphro is certain that Socrates is not entering a lawsuit against another, but that someone else has brought a lawsuit against him: he claims he would not 'charge' Socrates with charging another. Implicit in this mock charge is the acknowledgement that indicters themselves are not free from blame. In response to Euthyphro, Socrates agrees that he would 'Certainly not' bring a lawsuit against someone else, but clarifies that his particular case is not called a lawsuit; rather, it is called an indictment. Euthyphro's certainty that Socrates would not charge another man should be considered. It is likely that Euthyphro assumes that Socrates' infrequent visits to the law courts and his failure to prosecute in a society fond of litigation manifest a principled unwillingness to prosecute others. But the reason for Socrates' emphatic rejection of the very idea marks the first of a number of interesting questions that the dialogue raises.[19]

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[17] For more on where Socrates usually spends his time in Lyceum, see *Symposium*, 223d; *Lysis*, 203a; *Euthydemus*, 271a; *Charmides*, 153a.

[18] 'The 'King', a public official or archon selected annually by lot, had jurisdiction over the 'preliminary inquiry' in judicial cases involving matters concerning the gods, such as impiety. His office, being a remote descendant of the kingship of Athens' distant past, retained vestiges of the ancient kings' authority in the city over sacred things. He performed 'the most venerable and ancestral of the ancient sacrifices' (*Statesman*, 290e). The Porch (stoa) of the King was a public building in the marketplace' (West, p.41, fn 4).

[19] Consider *Apology*, 26a2-7; 31b2-c7.

One of the first of a series of taxonomical distinctions to arise in the dialogue, then, concerns the legal distinction between private and public suits: lawsuits, and indictments respectively. Socrates' case is given the name 'indictment' (*graphe),* which imbues his alleged crime with the status of being injurious to the public. His case is distinguished from the more general 'lawsuit' (*dike),* which can describe either public or private injury.[20] Implicit in this distinction of terms is the acknowledgement of a difference between crimes that affect an individual or family, as opposed to those affecting an entire community—and perhaps more subtly, a tacit acknowledgement of differences in the reasons for prosecuting or punishing. We can see this more clearly if we consider the possible motivations for murder as opposed to treason, and the different possible reasons for prosecuting either of these types of criminals.

As an indictment, Socrates' crime (that of corrupting the youth and impiety) was understood to be crime directed against the city as a whole rather than one or more particular individuals. As such, then, it would be akin, perhaps, to treason. Whereas theft or murder, or some such crime risks the lives or goods of one or some few citizens, treason and public crimes akin to it, risk the lives of all citizens, and indeed the community or polity as a whole. Additionally, as we shall see, the man who brought the charges was understood to be indicting on behalf of the entire city, out of love and concern for the well-being of his fellow citizens (2c1-3a5), rather than on behalf of a selfish interest or personal feud.

At the risk of prejudicing the subsequent analysis, certain general observations about the action of the dialogue are helpful in situating these

[20] In the case of murder in Athens, *dike* expressly describes a private injury (West, p.41, fn 5).

introductory details within the dialogic context, and are particularly helpful for understanding why the question of piety arises out of a conversation about legal trials. When later pressed by Socrates to reveal his wisdom by providing definitions of piety, Euthyphro begins with a definition that belongs to, but is not strictly representative of, the city. It entails a kind of strict adherence to the letter of the law irrespective of person and situation, and appeals primarily to the actions of the gods (5d8-6a3). With the help of Socrates, he works his way backwards to what can be seen as his most general definition. This more general definition would in all likelihood be given by a typical Athenian, and is therefore the definition closest to that of the citizen: piety is proper prayer and sacrifice to the gods—a definition informed by what the gods *say* as opposed to what the gods *do* (14c4-7). This, he argues, is what guarantees the preservation of families and communities (14b1-6). Since it is generally assumed that the gods are the cause of all good things (Socrates himself agrees to this in the conversation; 15a1-2), but also of the bad things (which Socrates does not explicitly agree to in the dialogue), a city must concern itself with the attitude of the gods towards itself. Generally, this means that a city must have officials, such as the King and the exegetes (4c10; referred to in this dialogue), to interpret the desires and wishes and the demands of the gods, so as to attain and retain the favor of the gods (14d1-2; 15a9-10). Because the city understands the gods to be disposed favorably towards the pious, impiety by any citizen risks the loss of the favor of the gods, and hence the loss of all good things they might bestow.

It is not difficult, in light of this understanding of the cosmos, to see why Socrates was perceived by some as a threat to the city. His alleged impiety, derived from his 'innovations concerning the gods', would be seen as an arrogant and dangerous 'challenge' to the gods that risked family and city, particularly since Socrates was seen as 'a skillful teacher of his own wisdom'. (3c9-10) Moreover (and perhaps more importantly since the charges pertain to corruption), questioning the commonly accepted conceptions of the gods calls into question the entire way of life of the city, whose festivals and religious exercises,[21] (6c2) and whose laws are presumed to enjoy divine support, according to the traditional accounts of the gods. Although the reasons for prosecuting Socrates are not spelled out in this dialogue—apart from the intriguing suggestion of Euthyphro: that the charge was motivated by envy[22]—we are given ample opportunity to try to grasp the range of issues that surround both his crime and the idea of piety in general.

(ii) Meletus and His Accusation (2c1-3b4)

After acknowledging that he would 'certainly not' lay charges against another man, Socrates names Meletus as his indicter. We move from asking why Socrates will not bring any man to trial, to why Meletus is bringing Socrates, a man who he does not even know personally, to trial. Apparently 'young and unknown', Meletus is a man whom Socrates did not even recognize when the indictment was

[21] All such festivals, incidentally, were listed permanently at the Porch of the King.
[22] If the charge was motivated by envy, it would seem to be more appropriately called a lawsuit, as it would appear to be a personal prosecution, rather than one made in the name of the city. Of course, if it was undertaken for the reason of envy, then its legitimacy would seriously be called into question. Socrates neither affirms nor denies this suggestion, though in *Apology*, he appears to be in agreement; 28a.

brought against him, though he has obviously seen him or been privy to a description of him since the charges were laid, for he provides Euthyphro with an account of his physiognomy. The lack of personal acquaintance between the two men would *seem* to confirm the likelihood that this case is properly called an indictment.

Socrates goes on to speak of Meletus' charge in a way that implies the young man has wisdom beyond his years. (2c5) Of course, in all likelihood, this is an ironic statement that is meant to draw attention to what is in actuality Meletus' lack of wisdom. The possibility of a young man truly understanding what his charge implies strikes us as ridiculous. We all tend to acknowledge age as a factor in claims to greater knowledge; experience proves to be, at the very least, helpful in the cultivation of prudence and practical wisdom. It is for this reason that rashness is typically associated with youth, why men and women tend to elect older politicians who have proven themselves as responsible members of the community to rule, and why patriarchal societies have been prominent historically. But Meletus is both young *and* unknown and so in indicting his elder he is assuming that he has superior knowledge that would seem to be beyond his position in life.[23] In effect, Meletus' prosecution of Socrates is a tacit 'claim' to be wiser than Socrates.

Socrates goes on to say that Meletus 'alone of the politicians appears to me to begin correctly' (2c7-d1). This amounts to a subtle criticism of the current statesmen, and an indication that in actuality, the city's youth are not being properly

[23] We should note, however, that in all likelihood Meletus was put up to the task of indicting Socrates by a number of other older citizens, namely Antyus and Lycon, who testified as co-accusers (*Apol*, 36a6-11).

cared for, at least insofar as Athens' civic leaders have anything to do with it. Socrates then elaborates this point by comparing correct nurture to certain agricultural practices: a farmer takes care of the young plants first, ensuring that they get off to a good start (e.g., that they are firmly rooted, etc.) by cleaning out the weeds that 'corrupt' the young sprouts. Only after accomplishing this does he turn to care for the older plants. In a similar way, one who properly tended the youth would be the cause of the greatest good for the city as the farmer is for his plants.[24]

The farmer analogy, and its place at the beginning of the dialogue is of broad significance. As noted in the introduction, one of the challenges in this dialogue is to discover the reasons for Socrates' continuance of his conversation with Euthyphro: why did he allow himself to be drawn into this conversation, and what is he hoping to achieve by pursuing it further? And, as in all dialogues, there seem to be two quite different possible motivations. Briefly and crudely put, one can be understood in terms of Socrates as theoretically self-interested, the other: Socrates as salutary educator and political reformer. Does Socrates primarily learn from men (including learning about them)? Or does he teach? Or both? In this dialogue, these two alternatives are represented by Socrates' often repeated claim (on the one hand) that he wants to learn about the divine things from Euthyphro (5a3-5b8; 5c4-8; 6e3-6; 7a4-5; 9a1-b3; 9d8-10; 11e3-6; 14b8-c1; 14d5-7; 15e6-16a5), and (on the other hand) by the possibility that Socrates is in fact attempting to turn Euthyphro away from bringing his father to trial.

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[24] We should note that rain, or the sun, would be serious contenders for the role of greatest good for the plants, just as the gods would be serious contenders for the role of greatest good for the city.

Only the second of these two alternatives fits with the farmer analogy—presuming, that is, that Socrates wishes to act as a good farmer. If so, he is demonstrating how one concerned with the youth would deal with the older plants or corruptors (i.e., Euthyphro); their conversation being a manifestation of his 'philanthropy' (3d5-9). Dealing with Euthyphro at this late point in his life, we may conjecture that Socrates has turned his attention from the younger plants to the older plants, thereby protecting Euthyphro's father from his potentially corrupting son (consider 5b4), and by extension defending the city's laws concerning human matters and concerning piety.

Before moving on to the next section, something further should be said about this agricultural analogy, one that is familiar to us from other dialogues as well as other writers, and intuitively makes sense as a model for education. As a metaphor grounded in nature, it implies that the correct standard of education is itself natural, implicit in the nature of the thing being nurtured. But there are differences between the farmer's art and the arts of either the statesman or the educator, differences that are significant for the entire dialogue. First, the corruption of men is not easily discerned; it is not as simple as identifying lack of growth in plants. Whether those who associated with Socrates were corrupted or improved was actually a matter of controversy—as healthy vs. sick plants rarely is. Second, what could it mean to speak about the 'corruption' of plants? When we speak of corruption of people, we are speaking of something that has moral connotations, something akin to debauchery or perversity, not simply of something weak as opposed to hearty, dying as opposed to thriving. A poorly-developed plant

can be likened to a poorly developed person (slothful, ignorant, graceless, etc.) but this is not what is meant by a corrupt man, capable of all kinds of evils.

We are compelled to ask, then, why does Plato have Socrates use a metaphor from nature when speaking about corruption? To use metaphors from the natural world is to obscure the difference between man and the other natural living things. When we acknowledge that men do not grow the same way as plants grow, that their end is not fixed in the same way, we, in a sense, remove man from nature. We can see this when we think of man as the Daedelean craftsman, as manipulator of nature and indeed of his own nature in accordance with what he perceives as his own good—an art that distinguishes him from all other beings. Plato may, in the final analysis, be both highlighting the differences between man and other natural living things as well as the similarities. After all, there is something to the analogy that does seem fitting, despite the concerns addressed above—that man has a naturally best condition in light of which we can judge proper nurture or education, but it is incomparably more difficult to 'see' this standard, or how it is best achieved. And of course, the fact that Socrates is being charged with corruption is enough to point to the difficulty of 'seeing' and agreeing on that standard.

The corruption charge, which is indirectly elucidated by the farmer analogy, is followed by Socrates' brief account of the charge of impiety, and according to what Socrates says, is directly related to this latter charge. Socrates corrupts because he is 'a maker of gods', he 'make[s] novel gods and [does not] believe in the ancient ones' (3b1-3). And while the idea of being a 'maker of gods' is apt to strike a reader unfamiliar with the Greek as strange, the word is the same as that

which is used to describe the activities of poets, that is, the act of making or doing (*poiein*) something. In effect, Socrates is being charged with being a 'poet' (*poietes*) of gods. It is also the same word used to describe Socrates' teaching activities: the spirit of the Athenians is aroused against him because they suppose he 'makes' (*poiein*) others like himself (3c10-d2). Euthyphro, who believes in the stories 'made' by the poets (6b5-7; 6b8-c5), sees no threat in Socrates' 'making', whereas Meletus supposedly sees it as a sign of his impiety, thus highlighting the ambiguity of this kind of making. Typically associated with divine revelation, this 'making of gods' is an act that is very difficult to judge, because the kind of wisdom that is called Revelation is elusive by nature. The men who are traditionally understood to 'make gods' under the divine inspiration of the Muses, such as Homer or Hesiod, are privy to a kind of knowledge that is by definition 'super-human': knowledge which transcends human understanding. From the vantage point of merely human knowledge, then, it is incapable of being judged.

(iii) Socrates and Euthyphro as the 'same sort' and the Question of Socrates' Visibility (3b5-3e3)

The section of the text that deals explicitly with Socrates' forth-coming trial (2c1-3e6) is quite brief, and Socrates says little about it. In regard to the formal charges he says only that the indictment is not ignoble, that Meletus 'knows in what way the young are corrupted and who their corruptors are,' that he is charging Socrates with 'corrupting those of his own [Meletus'] age' (2c17), and that Socrates corrupts the young because he 'make[s] novel gods and [doesn't] believe in the

ancient ones' and is a 'maker of gods' (3a6-b4). Socrates names corruption as the indictment brought against him by Meletus. But he explains it as having to do with heterodoxy and religious innovation only after Euthyphro requests further clarification ('Tell me, what does he assert that you do (poiein) to corrupt the young?' 3a9-b4). It is Socrates who fills out the corruption charge in political terms with his farmer analogy, but it is Euthyphro who expands upon the primary charge which corruption is linked to. Euthyphro immediately understands what is behind the heterodoxy charge—or thinks he does. It must have to do with Socrates' daimonion.

While in *Apology of Socrates*, Meletus was led to admit that what really lay behind his charge that Socrates did not believe in the gods of the city was that Socrates did not believe in the gods simply (26c9-10), Euthyphro shows no such suspicion about Socrates' impiety. In fact, Euthyphro seems to accept Socrates as a kind of kin. He assumes that what Socrates is referring to when he says that he is a 'maker of gods' is his daimonion, an assumption neither affirmed nor denied by Socrates, and he likens Socrates' 'gift' to his own. It is not altogether strange that Euthyphro does this. The existence of daimonions was an accepted part of traditional beliefs. It is obvious that the two men know each other, and quite likely Euthyphro has heard the stories about the daimonic interventions such as those recounted by Socrates in *Theages* and *Phaedrus*.[25] Failing to distinguish between the gift of prediction and that mysterious voice that negates action (3b1-c3), Euthyphro sees both Socrates and himself as 'the same sort,' (3c5) elevated above the gullible (3b9-c1) and ephemeral many, (3b6; also: 4a9-b2; 4e10-5a2) joined by

[25] Also, see *Apology*, 31c4-d5.

lofty concerns and talents that others could never understand.[26] Euthyphro thus reveals himself to depart from an ordinary Athenian understanding of piety: he does not see impiety in Socrates' behavior, but rather a kind of kindred heterodoxy.

Euthyphro also fails to distinguish between the reaction that the people have to him, and that which they have to Socrates. He seems, at the very least, to think that being thought mad and being laughed at in Assembly[27] (3c1-3; 4a) on the one hand, and being tried for impiety on the other,[28] are akin to each other. At the very least he thinks the responses to both himself and Socrates are motivated by the same low passion: envy, (3c4) a motivation that Socrates does not seem completely convinced of (3d1-2).[29] Euthyphro does not take seriously the seriousness of the threat of the many (5b10-c2). Indeed, he believes he would have no trouble winning Socrates' trial in court (5b10-c2). To be fair, however, he is aware (or at least becomes aware as a consequence of this conversation) that he cannot win if men choose not to listen (9b9-10); his advice to Socrates, then, may be an attempt to assuage Socrates' worries: "But one should not give any thought to them, but should confront them." (3c5-6) Far more likely, however, is that this advice is an

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[26] Even when he goes to Assembly, Euthyphro speaks about divine things as opposed to human things. (3c1-2)

[27] That Euthyphro is laughed at in Assembly is an odd detail in this dialogue, but one that is quite revealing. The fact that 'of the things [Euthyphro has] foretold, [he has] spoken nothing that is not true' (3c3-4) would seem to be enough to guarantee some respect. Typically, although the veracity of a prophet's claim is difficult to judge because it consists in 'super-human' knowledge that cannot be judged from the vantage point of merely human knowledge, it can be judged in one way. That is, it can be judged in accordance with whether or not things came to pass as foretold. Here Euthyphro suggests that his predictions do come true, and yet no one believes him when he speaks. Rather, they laugh at him. This would seem to suggest that either his claims do not come true, or that it is not obvious that they do come true, or that Euthyphro is seen as such an eccentric that even if they do come true, people assume that there is no connection between the events and Euthyphro's prediction.

[28] Socrates is rather terse in his explanation of his indictment. He does not even mention that he is being tried for a capital crime, something that would likely help Euthyphro see the difference between the reaction of the Athenians to these two men as more distinct.

[29] Although he seems to express agreement in *Apology*, 28a.

indication that Euthyphro, who is concerned almost exclusively with loftier things, underestimates the power of the many due to his lack of political knowledge and understanding of human nature, a lack that is on display throughout the dialogue. And of course, we cannot forget his lack of shame and fear, two things that Socrates' admonishes Euthyphro to have at the close of the dialogue.

Euthyphro's seeming ignorance is not left unchallenged. Socrates is quick to draw the distinction between laughter and anger, locating the catalyst for the indignation and anger of the many towards him in his act of teaching his wisdom, and the act of making (*poiein*) others like himself (3c6-d2). The dialogue raises Socrates' visibility as something to be accounted for, particularly in light of Euthyphro's comparative invisibility. The similarities and differences between the two men, then, are not unimportant for the dialogue. Because Socrates is visible while Euthyphro is not, we are invited to consider what differs between the two men such as to constitute this important divergence in status in the minds of their fellow Athenians.

It is not the gift of divination simply that has 'aroused the spirits' of the citizens of Athens; most men probably assume, along with Euthyphro, that Socrates' daimonion is a means through which he has direct access to the gods, or that it is some kind of guardian spirit. But if this was the seat of their anger or envy, as Euthyphro suggests, then Euthyphro would be seen as equally threatening (for he too can supposedly communicate with gods)—especially in light of his heterodoxy. Neither can their anger be a response to boasting simply. Socrates undoubtedly comes across as arrogant, particularly when exposing the ignorance of politicians,

craftsmen and poets, but Euthyphro is no humble or reticent priest.[30] He has obvious contempt for the many, and disdain for human things, something that becomes clear through the course of his conversation with Socrates. Euthyphro is convinced both of his wisdom and his special relationship to the gods, and of his own superiority, qualified or limited only by his piety and reverence for the gods. (13c1-d5; 15a5-10)

According to Socrates, what constitutes the difference in how the two men have been perceived by their fellow Athenians is reducible to their willingness to teach. Socrates' willingness to 'say profusely whatever [he] possess[es] to every man, not only without pay, but even paying with pleasure if anyone is willing to listen' he attributes to his philanthropy, and contrasts his eagerness and love of man with Euthyphro's reticence and unwillingness to teach his own wisdom. (3d5-9) Whether Euthyphro is indeed unwilling to teach, or simply ignored (as he is in Assembly), is a genuine question, but the point is clear: 'neither this Meletus nor, no doubt, anyone else seems to see [Euthyphro]; but [Socrates] he discerns so sharply and easily that he has indicted [him] for irreverence' (5c4-6). Socrates, then, is taken seriously because he makes others like himself (3c10-d1).

Because the corruption charge is related to the impiety charge, we are invited to consider what it might mean for Socrates to 'make others like himself' by making them 'makers of gods'. Quite obviously, Euthyphro's assumption that Socrates' 'making' is synonymous with his daimonion is insufficient to explain this, for it is hard to imagine that Meletus would have seen so much danger in Socrates

[30] Although Socrates suggests that he is willing to teach his wisdom while Euthyphro is not (3d5-8), Euthyphro indicates throughout the dialogue that he has been trying to teach his wisdom (5e4).

making people believe in his daimonion. It becomes apparent, upon reflection, that this need not be what is meant.[31]

[31] Again, we should consider that Meletus admits to suspecting that Socrates is an atheist in *Apology*. See also *Euthyphro*, 6a7-10.

II. Euthyphro's Prosecution (3e7-6d8)

(i) Who Euthyphro is prosecuting and why; Socrates' shock; Euthyphro's family's indignation (3e7-4e4)

The transition that marks the shift from Socrates' indictment to Euthyphro's prosecution begins with Socrates saying of his forthcoming trial, "then how this will turn out now is unclear except to you diviners." Euthyphro responds by saying, "Perhaps it will be no matter, Socrates, and your contesting of the lawsuit will proceed as you have a mind for it to do, as I suppose mine will too" (3e3-7). This response is puzzling; we might expect a diviner to reply with a prediction, or, if he has no control over his art of divination (if he cannot actively seek communication with gods, but is rather a passive receptacle), with the reply that events will proceed in accordance with the will of the gods. But Euthyphro speaks of his own will as the likely cause of the future outcome: things will proceed as he has a mind for them to do. This statement points to Euthyphro's belief in the causality of his own will, but does little to clarify his understanding of the connection between his will and the will of the gods. Does he believe that things will proceed as he has a mind for them to do because the gods favor him? His response to Socrates seems to preclude the possibility of having had communication from the gods on this matter, and as we shall see, Euthyphro's art of divination disappears altogether from the conversation, pointing to Euthyphro's 'wisdom' as something distinct from that other divinely inspired knowledge of the future. Indeed, Socrates' question marks the last mention of Euthyphro's art.

Euthyphro goes on to explain who he is prosecuting, highlighting the tension between his views and those of the many: I am prosecuting someone whom in doing so 'I again seem mad'. He responds to the light-hearted pun in Socrates' question[32] of whether the charged man 'flies' with a literal answer, giving no indication that he has understood the joke: 'He is far from flying; in fact, he happens to be quite old.' Before Euthyphro reveals that he is in fact charging his father, he hesitates. It is difficult to say whether this hesitation is orchestrated to astound or surprise Socrates, as he does not appear to receive Socrates' shock with secret delight or eagerness but rather with the same evenness with which he pronounced the identity of the prosecuted. Socrates responds: "Heracles![33] Surely the many, Euthyphro, are ignorant of what way is correct. For I don't suppose that it is the part of just anyone to do this correctly, but of one who is no doubt already far advanced in wisdom" (4a9-b2). Responding calmly and soberly, Euthyphro agrees to his greater wisdom, "Far indeed, by Zeus, Socrates" (4b3).

The fact that Euthyphro is bringing his father to trial for murder is astonishing to Socrates; he supposes it to be on behalf of another family member. "For surely you wouldn't proceed against [your father] for murder on behalf of an outsider"(4b4-6). Euthyphro, however, does not accept as self-evident that a man should not prosecute his own father on behalf of a stranger; his response is a mixture of condescension and smugness:

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[32] The word for prosecute is *diokein*, which literally means 'pursue'. West suggests that Euthyphro's trial is being likened to a 'wild goose chase' (West, p.44, fn. 12).

[33] Oaths were very common in Athenian speech, and are an interesting phenomenon worth considering on their own. Here we shall limit ourselves to the observation that they typically functioned to buttress a promise or claim, as pious men would have fear and awe for the gods, such that a false oath could potentially affect their standing with the gods. Throughout the dialogue, all oaths are made in the name of Zeus, except this one. Perhaps this is an indication that Socrates sees Euthyphro's claim to wisdom as semi-divine.

> It's laughable, Socrates, that you suppose that it makes any difference whether the dead man is an outsider or of the family, rather than that one should be on guard only for whether the killer killed with justice or not; and if it is with justice, to let it go, but if not, to proceed against him—if, that is, the killer shares your hearth[34] and table. For the pollution turns out to be equal if you knowingly associate with such a man and do not purify yourself, as well as him, by proceeding against him in a lawsuit (4b6-c2).

Socrates' response—that surely Euthyphro would not proceed against his father on behalf of a stranger—marks the moment when he begins to fall in esteem in Euthyphro's eyes. The diviner is disappointed to see that someone whom he thought to be of the 'same sort' as himself is subject to the same ignorance as the many. We might say that it is precisely this moment when Euthyphro begins to lose interest in Socrates (as an equal), as well as the precise moment when Socrates gains an interest in him. Euthyphro becomes a source of wonder (5a3), perhaps because of his alleged wisdom or perhaps because of his certainty; the exact reason for Socrates' wonder is unclear.[35]

Euthyphro promptly proceeds to recount the series of events that led up to this, his strange intention. While farming on Naxos, Euthyphro and his father had hired a laborer who, in a drunken fit, slit the throat of one of the family servants. Binding the feet of the murderer and throwing him into a ditch, Euthyphro's father

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[34] This is the second mention of the hearth in this dialogue, and its presence is not insignificant. Meletus was said, in Euthyphro's own words, to do evil to the city, 'beginning from the hearth, by attempting to do injustice' to Socrates (3a7-9). This suggests a possible parallel between Euthyphro and Meletus, one also supported by the fact that both men are attempting to punish older men. (Despite Euthyphro's self-proclaimed superiority, then, he shares traits with men whom he disdains.) In fact, the two may be linked in that the hearth is linked with the ancestral, or the old. The hearth is of great significance in Athenian culture. It is the 'core' of the household in that it is the place where sacrifices are made in each home. It should also be noted that the sacrifices were typically made by the patriarch, thus symbolizing Athenian piety in two ways. Respect for the gods and religious laws and respect for the elders, who were the keepers of those laws (Walter Burkert has much to say on related issues in his book, "Greek Religion"). In prosecuting his father, Euthyphro is also 'attacking the hearth'.

[35] Again, we are faced with two alternative readings. We might conjecture that Socrates' wonder leads him to the decision to attempt to reform Euthyphro, or rather that he is amazed that Euthyphro claims to have wisdom, and so is genuinely interested to learn from him.

sent for advice from the exegete to see what he should do, an indication that the 'expertise' of Euthyphro may not be accepted as legitimate in the eyes of his family. In the meantime, the murderer died of neglect—which could be interpreted by Euthyphro as a divine indictment, but is not—and for this Euthyphro is charging his father with murder (4c4-d5). [36]

Euthyphro's stated reason for prosecuting his father, his fear of fellow pollution, does not legitimize his actions in the eyes of his family. They believe, contrary to Euthyphro, that 'it is impious for a son to proceed against his father for murder' (4e1-2), and they 'are indignant' because they do not believe that Euthyphro's father intentionally killed the murderer, and even if he did, 'one needn't give any thought to someone of that sort' because he was a murderer himself (4d6-e1). Euthyphro seems entirely oblivious to these considerations, which would seem to 'justify' his father as per the principle he himself acknowledges. The reason, it would seem, is that his concern for justice is only secondary to his concern for piety, and in particular his concern that he be perceived as pious in the eyes of the gods.

In fact, although his defense of his prosecution is made in the name of what we would typically call justice, his conclusion comes to rest on the authority of what we would call piety. Euthyphro says that it does not make 'any difference whether the dead man is an outsider or of the family, rather…one should be on

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[36] If, as suggested in the introduction, Euthyphro is bringing his father to trial as long as five years after the stated incident, then we must ask what the cause of his delay was. Was his fear of punishment eating away at him in this time? Did he struggle with his decision to prosecute his father? Did the laughter at his expense in Assembly provoke him to take drastic measures in order to prove his 'wisdom'? Especially since his father obviously did not think to consult Euthyphro's 'expertise' when faced with the question of how to deal with the murderer of his slave?

guard only for whether the killer killed with justice or not…'. The reason for which one should be on guard for this, however, is not simply because justice is choice-worthy in and of itself; rather, it is because of the further effects *for him* of not punishing the alleged crime: 'the pollution turns out to be equal if you knowingly associate with such a man and do not purify yourself, and him'. In short, Euthyphro's prosecution is grounded in a strange mixture of assumptions: first, that the gods favor justice, and second, that because the gods favor justice, he will be pious by virtue of enforcing punitive measures. These assumptions point to two standards to which he appeals in his prosecution; both the gods' will, and a standard outside their will: that of punitive justice. But despite his apparent concerns for justice, Euthyphro seems unwilling to consider the actual 'justness' or 'injustice' of his father's act, and this is precisely what his family is indignant about.

Euthyphro's parents also appeal to justice in their disagreement with Euthyphro, and also conclude with the authority of piety. They do not, despite what Euthyphro thinks, disagree with Euthyphro's principle—that a guilty man should be punished. Rather, they contend that Euthyphro's father did not intentionally kill the murderer (thus he is not himself a murderer, as he would conceivably be had he cut the man's throat), and even if he is responsible for the murderer's death, that it is of no consequence because the man was a murderer. They conclude that 'it is impious for a son to proceed against his father for murder'. They do not in any way indicate that a son should *never* proceed against his father (e.g. had he attacked the mother or his own children…as some gods did, they may not have made the same claim). We see then, that for both contesting parties, what is just is ratified and supported

by what is pious, which reveals an assumption about the gods: the gods are just, and doing what the gods demand is pious, so the just response to any situation reveals itself to be pious. However, while Euthyphro's family focuses on the 'justness' or 'injustice' of the particular act (thus, in a sense, subordinating piety to concerns for justice) Euthyphro ignores the particular act in favor of making justice subordinate to the demands of piety.

There is an obvious problem that can arise from the fact that piety and justice are so naturally intermingled in the minds of men: what the gods say can differ from what the gods do (and perhaps more pertinent—the gods can be questionable models of justice). Accordingly, there can be disagreement on what constitutes pious behavior, (in this situation, Euthyphro sides with what the gods *do* and his family with what the gods *say*) and therefore, because men believe that the gods abide by the standard of justice, the just solution is apt to differ, sometimes quite radically. This problem points to the need for expert interpreters of religious texts and signs, and indeed we see that Euthyphro's father consulted such an expert, but strangely, we never hear from Euthyphro, nor does Socrates ask, what this exegete had to say. The only 'expert' that we have direct access to in this dialogue is Euthyphro. But, as we shall see, determining the ground of his expertise or his wisdom proves to be a difficult task. Socrates appears to ignore Euthyphro's art of divination, separating it from his wisdom on these matters, and seeks to find the ground of his wisdom by asking for the *idea* that binds all examples of the pious together (5c8-d6). Whether there is in fact a standard from which to judge these competing claims—a form of the pious—is a question that will, for the most part,

dominate the remainder of the dialogue, but before we are even exposed to the rest of the conversation, we, as readers, are inclined to react to this trial as does Socrates, with shock. We are therefore invited to consider the standard to which we are appealing in the act of judging Euthyphro's trial. That is, are we inclined to judge Euthyphro's prosecution in light of concerns for piety, or in light of concerns for justice? As we shall see, Socrates spends the remainder of the discussion first separating out these two elements (piety and justice) and secondly, re-establishing the relationship on new grounds.

(ii)Socrates proposes to become Euthyphro's student; Euthyphro's belief in the gods of the city (4e5-6d8)

Euthyphro concludes that the disagreement he has with his family is a result of their 'knowing badly, Socrates, how the divine is disposed concerning the pious and the impious'. Socrates responds by asking Euthyphro if he does not fear that in pursuing a lawsuit against his father, he may in turn be doing something impious. But in doing so, he reformulates the character of Euthyphro's 'wisdom'. Rather than asking about his knowledge of how the divine is disposed *towards* the things pious and impious, he asks about Euthyphro's knowledge of how the divine things are disposed *and* the pious and impious things. As we saw in the last section, the concern that Euthyphro has for the pious rests on the belief that negative effects follow from impious acts. This can be reduced to the belief that the gods are favorably disposed towards the pious, an assumption expressed in Euthyphro's first attempt at defining the pious. Socrates' subtle suggestion that the pious may not be

causally connected to the disposition of the gods is an indication of how the conversation will proceed.

In response to Socrates' question as to whether Euthyphro fears doing something impious, Euthyphro replies, 'No, there would be no benefit for me, Socrates, nor would Euthyphro be any different from the many human beings, if I didn't know all such things precisely' (4e10-5a2). Needless to say, this is an odd response, and one that reveals both that Euthyphro is completely convinced of his superiority over other men, as well as being completely confident about his wisdom and his prosecution. Socrates' question has the effect of making Euthyphro's actions dependent upon his wisdom, and so if he cannot accurately convey his wisdom about piety, his prosecution will, by extension be called into question.

Socrates is impressed by what has been said, referring to Euthyphro as 'wondrous'. As noted above, the reasons for Socrates' wonder are unclear, but we may surmise that his wonder is connected both to the fact that Euthyphro is departing from traditional standards of piety, and that he claims to be in possession of a wisdom 'far advanced'. Euthyphro sets himself apart from the many with these controversial claims to knowledge and with his willingness to act on them. Socrates, who has always 'regarded it as important to know the divine things', is intrigued, perhaps even hopeful that Euthyphro may have something to teach him. He wishes now to become the student of Euthyphro.

Immediately following Socrates' proposal that he become Euthyphro's student, he proceeds to introduce Euthyphro to the burden of responsibility. As noted above, the farmer analogy points to one of two alternative readings of this

dialogue: that Socrates is attempting to reform Euthyphro, or more specifically, to turn him away from his prosecution of his father. In this proposal, we again see this possible interpretation, this time following immediately from what appears to be the ratification of the other possible interpretation: that Socrates wants to learn from Euthyphro. Socrates claims that he wants to become Euthyphro's student, but he also attempts to shake Euthyphro's confidence in his wisdom by proposing that he take responsibility for Socrates' alleged impiety. If Euthyphro's confidence in his wisdom is so great that he does not fear the gods, perhaps he will fear the many:

> Then, wondrous Euthyphro, wouldn't it be best for me to become your student and, before Meletus' indictment comes to trial, to challenge him on these very things? I would say that even in times past I regarded it as important to know the divine things, and now, since he asserts that I am doing wrong by acting unadvisedly and making innovations concerning the divine things, I have become your student. 'And Meletus', I would say, 'if you agree that Euthyphro is wise in such things, then hold that I too believe correctly and drop the lawsuit. But if not, then bring the lawsuit against him, my teacher, instead of me, on the ground that he is corrupting the old, me and his own father, by teaching me and by admonishing and punishing him. And if he isn't persuaded by me and doesn't give up the lawsuit or indict you instead of me, shouldn't I say in the lawcourt these very things on which I challenged him? (5a3-b5)

Euthyphro, however, is impervious to fear of the gods and to fear of men, 'if he should then attempt to indict me, I would discover, as I suppose, where he is rotten, and our speech in the law court would turn out to be much more about him than about me'.[37] Socrates' proposal to Euthyphro—that he become Euthyphro's student because he is so wise—if ironic—is prudent because it encourages him to teach Socrates, 'And since I am cognizant of these things, [that Euthyphro has wisdom and that he could prove it in court] my dear comrade, I desire to become your student, knowing that neither this Meletus nor, no doubt, anyone else even seems to see you; but me he discerns so sharply and easily that he has indicted me for irreverence (*asebeia*)' (5c4-8). Socrates appeals to Euthyphro's vanity while

[37] An ironic premonition of Socrates' trial.

actually, albeit subtly, insulting him (nobody even notices Euthyphro for all his wisdom), and the result is that Euthyphro is the more willing to share his wisdom; Socrates' apparent reverence for Euthyphro's wisdom urges him to continue with his guard down.

In responding to Socrates' suggestion to become his teacher, Euthyphro addresses only the second part of his proposal, that if Meletus fails to give up his lawsuit, then Socrates will, in public, insist that the indictment be brought against Euthyphro, his teacher. Euthyphro does not respond to the first part of Socrates' proposal—that in private Socrates will challenge Meletus. This is not without significance for the dialogue, for Euthyphro, rather than instructing his father on the pious and impious things in private, is attempting to prosecute him publicly.[38] He charges his father with 'knowing badly' 'how the divine is disposed concerning the pious and impious' (4e2-4). Instead of teaching him, however, he is proceeding against him in court, as Meletus is proceeding against Socrates. This suggests another parallel between the two accusers, and perhaps indicates in some way why Socrates claimed at the beginning of the dialogue that he would 'certainly not' (2b4) proceed against anyone in court.

Socrates' next question is a natural extension of the conversation. Now that Euthyphro has revealed the certainty of his wisdom, Socrates wants to know what that wisdom is. As noted above, however, Euthyphro professed to have wisdom of how the divine things are disposed towards the pious and the impious, but Socrates,

[38]This fact recalls Socrates' speech in *Apology:* 'And if I corrupt involuntarily, the law is not that you bring me in here for such involuntary wrongs, but that you take me aside in private to teach and admonish me. For it is clear that if I learn, I will at least stop doing what I do involuntarily. But you avoided associating with me and teaching me, and you were not willing to, but instead you brought me in here, where the law is to bring those in need of punishment, not learning' (26a2-8).

after reformulating this wisdom, has arrived at the *idea* of impiety, a strange approach to matters divine which shall be discussed at length in the conclusion. First, Socrates asks expressly about what sorts of things the reverent and irreverent are, concerning murder or theft of sacred things. Then, apparently assimilating reverence and piety, he asks, 'Or isn't the pious itself the same as itself in every action, and again, isn't the impious opposite to everything pious, while it itself is similar to itself and has one certain *idea* in accordance with impiety—everything, that is, that is going to be impious?' (5c10-d6) Failing to discriminate between Socrates' use of both piety (*hosion*) and reverence (*eusebes*)[39], Euthyphro agrees that, 'doubtless' this is entirely so.

Having agreed that there is one idea for the pious and that it is opposite to the impious, Euthyphro goes on to use his own example as that which constitutes the pious. Obviously unfamiliar with the dialectic method, Euthyphro does not even attempt to furnish a definition. Rather, he reformulates his reasons for proceeding against his father for murder, 'the pious is just what I am doing right now: to proceed against whoever does injustice regarding murders or thefts of sacred things, or is doing wrong in any other such thing, whether he happens to be a father or mother[40] or anyone else at all; and not to proceed against him is impious' (5d8-e3). Euthyphro has furnished a strange version of the 'letter of the law' argument: that

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[39] Throughout the dialogue Socrates refers to both the pious (hosion) and the reverent (eusebes). Although we accept West's translation for the most part, we differ with him in regard to these words. While West will at times distinguish the reverent from the pious, he also, at times, conflates them. We shall, on the other hand, consistently use the word reverent when *eusebes* and cognates appear in the Greek.

[40] Socrates was himself accused of teaching, or at the very least condoning the punishment of mothers and fathers in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, 1320 ff. This may provide insight into why some commentators take *Euthyphro* to be Socrates' true apology. That is, if Socrates is trying to turn Euthyphro away from his prosecution.

one must proceed against anyone who has committed a crime—with the qualification that the failure to do so is impious. His proof that 'the law is so disposed'—a proof that he has shared with others, (it seems he has been teaching his wisdom)—is that Zeus, whom human beings believe to be the 'most just of the gods' bound his own father and castrated him for eating his sons without justice. In Euthyphro's eyes, for human beings to be angry with him for proceeding against his father 'when he has done injustice' is a contradiction 'both concerning the gods and concerning' Euthyphro himself (5e3-6a6).

It is worth considering that, at this point, Socrates could use the same story that Euthyphro has provided to defend the actions of Euthyphro's father. The word 'bound' recalls how Euthyphro's father restrained the murderer of his servant. Socrates could, if he chose, point to the injustice of the murderer's actions, comparing them to those of Kronos, and to the justified actions of Zeus, who bound Kronos, comparing them to those of Euthyphro's father. Socrates does not do this, choosing instead to express his annoyance at such stories of the gods. While Socrates no doubt abstains from invoking these stories, lest he appear to be ratifying them, he seems to think it is a matter of greater significance to discern whether Euthyphro truly believes these stories (6b4-6), more so than how he chooses to interpret them. This in itself points to the fact that men can and do use the stories about the gods to justify their actions (regardless of whether they themselves believe in them): a dangerous fact. Because the stories about the gods can be interpreted in a variety of ways, they could, in theory, lend support to a multiplicity of actions, legitimizing even the usurpation of power. While Euthyphro's

prosecution of his father is not as extreme as the overthrowing of current powers, his attack on his father can be understood as an attack on the old ways. Albeit, not to the same degree that Socrates' annoyance with the stories about the gods can be perceived as an attack on the old ways. Indeed, his annoyance at the stories of the gods has led to his reputation for being a 'wrongdoer'.

Professing ignorance about the truth of these stories, Socrates asks Euthyphro whether he truly believes in them, stating that if he does, he, Socrates, must concede to them as well. To this Euthyphro responds, 'Yes, and things even more wondrous than these, Socrates, which the many do not know'. Ignoring what Euthyphro might know that the many do not, Socrates asks about whether Euthyphro believes in the wars and enmities as spoken of by the poets and as imaged by the painters,[41] and in particular about the 'robe filled with such adornments which is brought up to the Acropolis in the Great Panathenaea' (6b8-c4).[42] Responding in the affirmative, Euthyphro again emphasizes that he knows many other things that will astound Socrates, and for the second time, Socrates ignores his tacit offer to tell of them (6c5-10). Socrates seems to be more

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[41] The stories about the gods are distinct from the images of the gods, but they are related. Homer's works in particular inspired pictures of the gods in the minds of men, especially through his use of epithets. Socrates may be subtly pointing to the fact that Homer speaks of the gods as corporeal, which in turn inspires artists to create images of them. While this may seem to be a small point, after all the Bible appears to encourage us to picture both God and Jesus in human form, the significance is far reaching. If a god is embodied, he is susceptible to change. Maimonides dedicated a great portion of his *Guide* to the question of God's corporality. Muslims prohibit the making of images of god. Indeed, *Republic* deals extensively with this question.

[42] The 'small' Panathenaea was the birthday festival of Athens that marked each new year, and witnessed the ascendancy of the new archon (king) to office. The Great Panathenaea was celebrated every four years as a Pan-Hellenic agon. The central festive act was the presentation of Athena' s robe, a vestment that young women worked on for four months prior to the festival. The traditional motif worked into the cloth was the battle with the Giants. Interestingly (if Euthyphro truly is charging his father five years after the death of the murderer) , legal amnesty was announced at this festival; not even murder trials could be carried over to the new year (Burkert, p.228; 232).

concerned with the stories that everyone knows, or in particular with the stories as presented by the poets and painters.

After having discovered that Euthyphro does indeed entertain a genuine belief in the stories about the gods as recounted by the poets, Socrates cuts short the conversation about the stories of the gods, and returns to his original question, 'But you will explain these things to me some other time, at leisure. Now, however, try to say more plainly what I was asking you just now. For you did not teach me sufficiently earlier, comrade, when I asked what ever the pious is [Notice, he does not now mention the impious]. Instead you told me that what you are doing now, proceeding against your father for murder, happens to be pious' (6c9-d4). Euthyphro's genuine belief in the gods as portrayed by the poets is important for Socrates to know. This prelude to their discussion is what sets the parameters for what is to follow, for Socrates has already learned something significant about the character of Euthyphro's 'wisdom'. Although Socrates could have returned to the original question directly after Euthyphro gave an example rather than a definition, he indulged the conversation about the gods long enough to establish that he, Socrates, is annoyed at these stories, but will concede to them if his comrade, Euthyphro, truly believes in them. Throughout the remainder of the discussion, Socrates says nothing to undermine these beliefs, and says nothing further about his annoyance with these stories. Instead, he works within Euthyphro's model of the gods.

III. First Attempt at a Formal Definition (6d8-11e2)

(i) The idea of the pious: what is dear to the gods; the gods dispute (6d8-8b6)

Socrates next renews his request to be taught the *idea* by which all pious things are pious, a request that had been misunderstood by Euthyphro, who appears to have no formal training in the art of argument. He had given a 'partially general' account (the pious is proceeding against injustice) emphasizing that it is exemplified by what he is doing: prosecuting his father. Socrates, searching for a comprehensive definition (not an example), reminds Euthyphro that he had agreed to teach him the *eidos* by which all pious things are pious—not just one or two of the pious things, but the one *idea* itself,[43] so that 'by gazing at it and using it as a pattern, I may declare that whatever is like it, among the things you or anyone else may do, is pious, and that whatever is not like it *is not*' (6d8-e7; my emphasis). Because Socrates chooses to emphasize what is *not pious* rather than what is strictly *impious*, we are reminded that what is not pious need not thereby be regarded as impious—that there are things that are neither pious nor impious.[44]

Euthyphro may be a little confused as to why Socrates would want to proceed in this way; in any case, he obligingly responds to Socrates' request with, 'If this is the way that you wish, Socrates, I'll tell you in this way too' (6e7-8), thus revealing that he sees no great difference between the two ways of indicating what

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[43] These two words appear to be interchangeable, but the fact that both are used in one sentence suggests that Plato discriminates between them, even if in a subtle way.

[44] For example, a man who commits murder unjustly may be impious, but a man who does not is not necessarily pious. This problem is an extension of the problem of asserting opposites. There may be one form for the pious, as there may be for health, but that there are many types of sicknesses, and similarly perhaps impiety complicates the possibility of finding one form for the 'opposite'.

piety (and impiety) are. And, seeing no reason why he should not comply, he humors Socrates.

On first reading, Euthyphro's initial attempt at a formally correct answer seems incongruous with his earliest formally defunct answer; that one must proceed against anyone who has done injustice regardless of relation in accordance with the stories about the gods is replaced by 'what is dear to the gods is pious, and what is not dear is impious' (6e10-7a). At the very least, the formally defunct answer was in keeping with the spirit of his deed—the prosecution of his father—whereas the formally correct answer—what is dear to the gods is pious—is not obviously connected to that deed and his immediate concern for the pious. This definition is much more general, and is not obviously tailored as a defense of his prosecution (which is, no doubt, what Socrates wanted), as the first one was. But if we consider Euthyphro's motivation for prosecuting his father, as he himself describes it, we see that the stated reason for taking his father to trial—the fear of pollution—is in fact in keeping with this second attempt at a definition. The fear of pollution can be restated as the fear of the consequences of doing something that is not dear to the gods. While the congruity between answers by no means reflects careful consideration on the part of Euthyphro, it is important to see that the two definitions fit together if we are to comprehend how Euthyphro understands the pious, and what he expects to gain from pious behavior. It is also important for considering what Socrates is seeking to learn from him (consider 14b8-9). We should also note that this definition bifurcates the world into two extremes: the pious and the impious.

Socrates is not ignorant of the connection between the two attempts at definitions; one even gets the sense that he has waited until Euthyphro's full understanding of piety has been laid out before turning to its investigation: 'Altogether noble, Euthyphro. You have now answered just as I was seeking for you to answer. Whether it is true, however, I don't yet know. But clearly you will go on to teach me that what you say is true'.[45] 'Certainly', Euthyphro responds. However, what he is now obliged to defend is not his own definition, but rather Socrates' reformulation of it:

> Come then, let us consider what we are saying. The thing god-loved[46] and human being god-loved are pious, while the thing god-hated and he who is god-hated are impious. The pious is not the same as the impious, but most opposite. Isn't this so? (7a6-10)

In his reformulation, Socrates changes what is 'dear to the gods' to what is 'god-loved' and expands upon the definition by adding the human being that is 'god-loved', an addition that Euthyphro does not object to, probably because it was already implied in his definition. In this restatement Socrates at first appears to emphasize the fact that men believe that they are favored by the gods because they are pious, an idea that is presumably close to the pollution-fearing Euthyphro's heart, and is congruous with a more common-sense understanding of piety . However, the definition is cast in terms that leave open the possibility that men are

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[45] By referring to what has been said as 'altogether beautiful' (or 'altogether noble'—*pagkalos*), without yet knowing if it is true, Socrates suggests that nobility or beauty in speech may not necessarily be dependent upon the truth of that speech—thus the existence of rhetoric.

[46] While West translates this word (*theophiles*) as dear-to-the-gods, he acknowledges the literal meaning as something closer to god-loved or god-dear. We shall use this formulation, god-loved, for all uses of the word. The phrase 'dear to the gods', which is Euthyphro's formulation at 6e10-7a, is translated from *prosphiles tois theois*, a phrase distinct from what West translates as dear-to-the-gods. I think that 'god-loved' is a more effective translation for up-coming sections of the text.

pious *because* they are god-loved—a profound complication in the argument that shall be challenged shortly.

Moreover, Socrates adds to Euthyphro's definition 'that the pious is not the same as the impious, but *most* opposite' (my emphasis). This seemingly small addition, which Euthyphro does not object to, and perhaps does not see the significance of, allows for third and possibly fourth middle categories ('neither' or 'both'), reflecting whatever the gods are indifferent to. This middle category is of fundamental importance, for this third class may in fact be quite extensive. Euthyphro, along with many religious 'fanatics', tends to bifurcate the world, and Socrates, by adding 'most opposite' to Euthyphro's definition, is attempting a dramatic reform of his definition.

Not noticing its implications, Euthyphro agrees to Socrates reformulation and further asserts that it appears to have been well said (7a11-b1), an assertion that Socrates does not quite agree with, since it apparently conflicts with something earlier agreed to: 'But wasn't it also said that the gods quarrel, Euthyphro, and differ with each other, and that there are enmities among them toward each other?' (7b2-4; cf. 6bc) Euthyphro agrees that indeed this was said, and Socrates goes on to ask him what the differences between the gods are *about,* such that they arouse enmity and anger. Proposing that they consider the question 'as follows', Socrates points out that men do not quarrel about number—about which of two groups of things is larger—rather they go quickly to calculation and resolve their differences. Likewise, with greater and lesser, they go to measuring, and with heavier and lighter they go to weighing (7b6-c7). But when it comes to matters concerning the

just and the unjust, the noble and the shameful, the good and the bad, men cannot come to a sufficient decision about them, therefore differing and becoming enemies to one another (7c8-d5).

All three of the first examples, number, size and weight, presume that the quarrel is about a perceptible thing (that can be measured and weighed) as opposed to a philosophic quarrel about what 'number' or 'big' or 'light' is. The last three examples, however, presume a more philosophic quarrel about what 'the just', 'the good', or 'the noble' is, failing to take into account that men often agree over things considered 'good', but disagree over who should get them, thus interpreting 'the just' differently. Moreover, these examples are meant to be comprehensive in that they represent all things that men quarrel over, 'For surely [men and gods] wouldn't quarrel with each other unless they differed about these things, would they?' But don't men, and especially the gods, as portrayed in the traditional stories, differ about other things? Love matters, for example, are a chronic source of conflict within the family of gods. This point is not without significance, as Euthyphro's prosecution can be interpreted as an attempt to win the love of the gods.

Perhaps the most important source of quarrel between men, and certainly the most important for this dialogue, is the gods. By pointing to number, weight and size, Socrates subtly points to this very fact. How many gods are there? And does he or do they have weight and size? These questions are the source of endless, violent enmities between men, and are the most difficult to resolve because of the difficulties of knowing the divine things (Indeed, knowing the divine things may not, in the final analysis, even be possible; 6b3-4).

As to why men quarrel over 'the just', 'the good' and 'the noble', and are apt to become enemies over such things, it suffices to say that there is more at stake in these concerns than there is with matters of number, size, and weight. Most men are concerned with these things in a practical sense, not in a contemplative sense. They do not ask what the just is because most often they are certain that they already know, as we see with Euthyphro, who is certain that he knows not only what the pious is, but also the just—as indicated in his first answer ('one should be on guard only for whether the killer killed with justice or not' and if not 'to proceed against him'). This is part of the reason men are likely to become enemies over such questions, because they are interested in the benefit or practical use of the just, the noble and the good, not with the truth about these things.[47] And this in fact appears to be the reason why Socrates has introduced these examples. Euthyphro, who is certain that the gods love punitive justice, does not for a moment consider that knowledge about justice is exceedingly difficult. According to what Socrates has just revealed, not even the gods can be used as examples, for they too quarrel about these things. But this means (on Euthyphro's view) that 'some [gods] believe some things just, others believe others, according to [Euthyphro's] argument, and [similarly concerning] noble and shameful and good and bad. For surely they wouldn't quarrel with each other unless they differed about these things' (7e1-5). Because Euthyphro agrees that the gods 'love whatever they believe just and noble and good, and hate the opposites of these' (7e7-9), he is committed to asserting that one thing can be both loved and hated by the gods, and therefore god-loved and

[47] As stated above, each of these things pose separate practical problems: we compete for good things, hence interpret what is just, etc. (as in Euthyphro's case).

god-hated simultaneously. In accordance with his definition—that the pious is what is dear to the gods—the same thing would be both pious and impious at the same time (7e10-8a7). His definition, therefore, reveals itself to be wrong,[48] and, by extension, his prosecution to be unstable.

One cannot help but think that Euthyphro was set up for this fall, which is not to say that the problem is not necessarily intrinsic in his view. Rather, it is to say that Socrates is capitalizing on Euthyphro's contradictions, and leading him to certain realizations. Throughout the conversation, since the *idea* of the pious was first introduced, it has been referred to, or at least implied to be the opposite of the impious by Socrates (5d1-5; 6d9-e2; 6e3-6; 7a4-8;). Euthyphro's agreement on this is what has led him to this refutation. His second definition—what is dear to the gods is pious—has been refuted because he agreed first that the pious and the impious are opposites, and second that the gods 'love whatever they believe noble and good and just'.[49] Although Socrates may ultimately be pointing to a problem with seeing the pious and impious as opposites, (this opposition recurs throughout the dialogue and is a particularly relevant opposition for Socrates who was charged

[48] In the conclusion of this part of the argument, we see that Euthyphro, who agrees throughout the dialogue that the pious and the impious are opposites, has failed to see that in accordance with this definition, a pious thing could be impious at the same time, until Socrates points it out to him. Despite his claims to wisdom, he has failed to recognize this for himself, and therefore has failed to summon his intellect to the question of the pious. This kind of investigation may require acknowledging that one thing can be both itself and its opposite at the same time (not for either verbal or ontological reasons—his problem is theological). That Euthyphro hasn't seen this for himself seems to be a consequence of relying on his preferred method of expounding his wisdom—that of telling stories about the gods—rather than on Socrates' preferred method of dialectical investigation. At the very least, Euthyphro's failed argument calls into question his genuine appreciation of wisdom. His response to Socrates statement that the same thing would be pious and impious according to this argument is, 'Probably'. This response reveals that although Euthyphro acknowledges the role of contradiction in argument (see also:6a4-5) he does not accept the law of non-contradiction without some hesitation, perhaps indicating that he is not rigorous in employing it.

[49] Socrates here reverses the order of the 'the just', 'the noble' and 'the good' to 'the noble', 'the good' and 'the just'.

with impiety), a problem that is not simply 'a mistaken faith in opposites' but rather a fundamental problem because it bifurcates the world, he makes use of this opposition to his advantage (along with Euthyphro's assumption that the gods favor the just). And it is by using Euthyphro's assumptions to his own advantage that he refutes Euthyphro's definition.

> Then you didn't answer what I asked, you wondrous man. For I wasn't asking what same thing is at once both pious and impious: whatever is god-loved is also god-hated, as is likely. Consequently, Euthyphro, in doing what you are now doing, punishing your father, it is nothing wondrous if you are doing something dear to Zeus but hateful to Kronos and Ouranos, and dear to Hephaestus but hateful to Hera (8a8-b4).

The first three gods mentioned are familiar to us from Euthyphro's defense of his prosecution. While we may assume that Zeus attacked his father in the name of justice, and therefore would support Euthyphro's action as 'dear to him', and Ouranos would likely find it hateful since he was attacked by his own son, Kronos is a strange example to cite because he both *attacked* his father, and *was attacked* by his son. Socrates says that it would be nothing wondrous if Kronos found Euthyphro's act hateful, thereby showing why it would be impossible to behave consistently in accordance with Euthyphro's view (for Kronos once found the act 'loveable').

It is equally likely, however, that Socrates is suggesting that Kronos' concerns for justice figure more prominently in what he can potentially lose by injustice than gain by justice, or that once he was attacked by his own son he came to see that his act of father-punishing was indeed unjust. This would suggest that men and gods are quick to defend their own self-interest in the name of justice, which is a power that men and gods alike feel awe and respect before. On the other hand, when they suffer the same loss themselves they are apt to reconsider their

initial claim, because they have fear of what they come to call injustice (of suffering the same act at the hands of others).

This is further suggested by the reference to Hephaestus and Hera. While we do not know for certain what their examples are referring to, it is likely that Socrates is suggesting a parallel between Euthyphro and Hephaestus, on the one hand, and Hera and Euthyphro's mother, on the other. While this initially seems to make sense, when we consider the act that may have turned Hephaestus against Zeus, his father, we see that he was acting in the interest of his mother,[50] for which he was cast out of the heavens.[51] If his defense of his mother was dear to him, then surely it would have been dear to her, as she was the person suffering at the hands of Zeus. But Socrates says that Euthyphro's act may be hateful to Hera, suggesting that some other concern would take precedence over suffering under her husband. West suggests that perhaps Hera would recognize that the downfall of her husband would mark her own loss of power and privilege, an interpretation that seems plausible, as is his further suggestion that she might realize that father-punishing may lead to mother-punishing, as was threatened in Aristophanes' *Clouds*.[52] Perhaps equally as significant is that the mere mention of Hera and Hephaestus reminds us of all the quarrels over love affairs, that source of fighting that Socrates neglected to mention. In any case, the reference to all five gods seems to be suggesting that what is dear to the gods is not the pious or the just as an idea, rather what is dear to the gods is their own self-interest. These examples, then, tie back in to the reason why men are apt to become enemies over disputes about the just, the

[50] Suggesting, perhaps, the difficulty of being pious towards both one's mother and one's father.
[51] *Iliad*, I. 555-611
[52] West, p.50, fn. 26.

noble, and the good. They are not concerned with the truly just or noble or good, but rather with what they perceive to be their own self-interest, which they defend in the name of the just or the noble or the good. Men and gods alike, according to this argument, are primarily willers, not knowers, and thus, these examples aggravate the intractable problems with Euthyphro's view of piety.

(ii) Formal agreement on justice, dispute about what constitutes injustice; No one dares say they ought not to pay the penalty for injustices done (8b7-9c9)

While for some men, seeing one thing as both itself and its opposite might lead to perplexity and to the 'what is?' question, Euthyphro feels no such apparent discomfort over the fact that, according to his definition of the pious, his act is at once both pious and impious. In fact, rather than moving ahead to a new definition, or admitting ignorance, Euthyphro backtracks, reverting to his first example of the pious. The fact that supposedly gods, like men, do not agree on the just the noble and the good leads Euthyphro to assert that, 'none of the gods differs one with another about this, at least: that whoever kills someone unjustly must pay the penalty' (8b7-9). Socrates is (once again) compelled to deal with Euthyphro's intractable stance—one that justifies his own prosecution in his eyes—this time making it clear to Euthyphro that although men agree with the principle that injustice ought to be punished, they disagree on *what* in fact constitutes an injustice. 'What, then? Have you ever heard any human being claim in a dispute that one who kills unjustly, or does anything at all unjustly, need not pay the penalty?' (8b10-c2) Euthyphro, revealing his thoughtlessness on the question of justice, responds,

'Certainly. They don't stop disputing in this way, especially in the law courts. For although they have done very many injustices, they will do and say anything to escape the penalty'.

At this point we begin to see Euthyphro's prosecution more clearly. He believes that his parents oppose him on principle, manifesting an unwillingness to let justice be served. He fails to recognize that they are in agreement with his principle that one should be prosecuted if guilty of unjustly murdering a man, regardless of connection, but that they disagree that Euthyphro's father killed the murderer *unjustly*. Socrates brings this point out in what he says next: 'Do they in fact agree, Euthyphro, that they have done injustice, and having agreed, do they nevertheless assert that they need not pay the penalty?' When Euthyphro acknowledges that they do not, Socrates further remarks that, 'Then they will not do and say anything at all. For I suppose that they don't dare to dispute by saying that even if they have done injustice they need not pay the penalty. Instead, I suppose they assert that they haven't done injustice, don't they?'[53]

Reformulating this same argument in connection to the gods, and then again for both the gods and the humans, Socrates states variations of this same idea five times for Euthyphro (8c6-e8), here at the center of the dialogue—always with the caveat, 'if the gods do dispute' or 'if the gods do quarrel'. Socrates emphasizes this point: 'Then they don't dispute by claiming that the doer of injustice need not pay the penalty; instead they perhaps dispute who the doer of injustice is, and what he

[53] Of course, we ought to consider Socrates' own example in light of this point. Is he not claiming similar things, things that men do not *dare* to claim?

did, and when'[54] and that 'no human being or god *dares* to say that the doer of injustice ought not to pay the penalty' (8d8-10; my emphasis). Socrates suggests, then, that both men and gods have a natural awe, or reverence, or shame in the face of justice. And still again Socrates emphasizes: 'the disputants dispute about each of the particular things done, both human beings and gods, if gods do dispute. They differ about a certain action, some asserting that it was done justly, others unjustly'.

After struggling to make clear to Euthyphro that men and gods alike disagree on matters concerning justice, as they don't on matters pertaining to number, Socrates is now dramatically emphasizing this point: even formal agreement about justice does not preclude substantial disagreement in particular cases. His end? To challenge what was implicit in Euthyphro's first example of the pious: first that the gods love punitive justice, and second, that he is pious in doing what the gods love (enforcing punitive justice). Rather than taking up the content of Euthyphro's first example—that his prosecution is a manifestation of pious behavior—when it was stated, Socrates chose to wait until Euthyphro's definition was drawn out in its entirety. Now that the two elements of his example have been exposed—both the outside standard of punitive justice and the gods' love—Socrates is beginning his attack by addressing the former half: the enforcement of punitive justice. He will soon turn to the latter half—the love of the gods—but first he is taking pains to demonstrate to Euthyphro that his certainty about the injustice of his father's act is something he ought to question carefully. His parents' disagreement with him is not an indication that they are attempting to escape paying

[54] If Euthyphro is prosecuting his father five years after the incident on Naxos, this restatement is likely indirectly referring to this fact.

the penalty, but rather that they do not think Euthyphro's father committed an injustice. Socrates is so concerned to instill the seeds of doubt in Euthyphro that he is prepared to leave the status of justice completely controversial; he does not ask about the form of injustice, nor does he even suggest that such a thing exists. In so doing, he radically questions the outside standard by which Euthyphro wants to stabilize piety. Accordingly, Socrates and Euthyphro must next turn to piety on its own, leaving behind its connection to the just. As the conversation continues, justice and piety become further separated until the point where Euthyphro reaches an impasse and then Socrates can re-establish a relationship between the two, but on his own terms.

Having made the argument that men and gods disagree about justice in the abstract, then, Socrates next turns back to Euthyphro's own prosecution in the attempt to make him see that what he is now doing is not self-evidently just *or* pious:

> Come then, my dear Euthyphro, teach me too, so that I may become wiser, what your proof is that all gods believe that that man died unjustly who while serving for hire became a murderer, and then, bound by the master of the man who died, met his end because of his bonds before the one who bound him found out from the exegetes what he should do about him; and that it is correct for a son to proceed against his father and denounce him for murder on behalf of someone of this sort. Come, try to show me in some way plainly about these things, that all gods believe more than anything that this action is correct. And if you show me sufficiently, I will never stop extolling you for your wisdom (9a-b3).

Euthyphro, perhaps beginning to sense the difficulties in his own position, such that it would be impossible to show Socrates that all of the gods agree that his prosecution is correct (he himself agreed that Kronos and Ouranos may not support this action) tries to beg off answering with, 'But perhaps it is no small work, Socrates, although I could display it to you quite plainly' (9b4-5) At this point, the

reader is apt to get frustrated with Euthyphro, or more frustrated than before. We want him to admit that he does not know what justice is, but he refuses. Euthyphro's rigidity and vanity are at their most shocking here—how could he continue to insist on his wisdom? Whether Euthyphro is unmoved is an important interpretive question. It seems most likely that he is a bit 'shaken' by what has just come to pass, but that he is putting up a bold front, a fact that appears to be ratified by Euthyphro's response to what Socrates says next. 'I understand. It's because I seem to you to be poorer at learning than the judges, since clearly you will show them that such things are unjust and that all the gods hate them' (9b6-8). Ignoring Socrates' poorness at learning, Euthyphro indirectly agrees with his comment by saying that he could teach the many judges, *if only they listen*. Although this may be an exceedingly small concession of weakness, in saying this Euthyphro manifests the first sign of wavering confidence.

(iii) Amendment to first definition: The pious is what ***all*** *the gods love: is the pious pious because loved or loved because pious? (9c10-11b2)*

Having left off the particular content of the gods' love, then, and having dealt with the 'difficulty of inferring the moral order from the doings of the gods',[55] Socrates goes on to address the formal capacity of loving in its relation to the pious, and the difficulty of inferring the moral order from the gods' love simply. He first helps Euthyphro to reformulate his definition: 'is this the correction that we are now making in the argument: that whatever all the gods hate is impious, and whatever they love is pious, but whatever some love and others hate is neither or both?'

[55] Cropsey, "Euthyphro" in *Plato's World*, 61.

Euthyphro does not notice that according to this definition, his prosecution, as both loved by some gods and hated by others, is either both pious and impious, or it is neither—two radically different construals of the 'middle category'. On the one hand, if it is neither, then there is no simple dichotomy between the pious and the impious as Euthyphro would have it. All things in the world would not fall within one or the other of these two categories; some things, perhaps most things, are not appropriately evaluated in terms of the pious or the impious. If this is the case, Euthyphro's ostensible motive for prosecuting his father may be illusory (if what his father did was neither pious nor impious).[56] On the other hand, if one thing can be both pious and impious, the very idea of piety is incoherent and difficult to carry into practice. It would be as though the same regimen (or action, or medicine, or surgery) were simultaneously health-inducing and sickness-inducing; there would be no way to do the 'healthy' thing. Similarly, if there are forms of behavior that are both pious and impious man is stuck between conflicting demands: do x because it is pious; avoid x because it is impious.

Euthyphro, oblivious to the implications of this far more complicated taxonomy, blithely accepts it as a basis for proceeding: 'for what prevents it, Socrates?' Amending his previous definition, Euthyphro now asserts that 'I would say that the pious is whatever *all* the gods love, and that the opposite, whatever *all* gods hate, is impious'. Again Socrates resists simply acceding to Euthyphro's claim, asking if the two shouldn't consider 'whether this is said nobly? Or should we let it go and just accept what we ourselves and others say, conceding that

[56] Whereas the prosecution itself may (then) be impious.

something is so if only someone asserts that it is?'[57] It seems Euthyphro did not pick up on Socrates' earlier hint that the beauty or nobility of a speech is not necessarily connected to its truth (7a2-5). Apparently prepared to conflate truth and nobility, he confidently asserts that 'this is now said nobly'.

Observing that they will soon know better, Socrates asks Euthyphro if 'the pious [is] loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved' (10a1-3). If the pious is simply 'defined' by whatever the gods love, with there being no rational account of why they love what they love, then the problem of the pious reduces to determining what in fact they love (and hate—another facet of the problem Socrates chooses to ignore). Since Reason cannot determine this, Revelation is required. Whereas, if gods love something because it is pious, then there is no substantive content to this definition, and one is no further ahead in understanding the pious. Since neither of these two alternatives is problem free—each is attended by its own set of complications, the answer chosen by Euthyphro will not result in a clear conclusion to the discussion. It is clear, however, that Socrates' question is one that will have momentous implications for Euthyphro's understanding of the gods, a fact that (once more) Euthyphro does not indicate any awareness of, first of all because Euthyphro is not sure what Socrates means. And so Socrates attempts to 'explain more plainly' the distinction he intends.

Using the examples of a thing carried and a thing carrying, a thing led and a thing leading, and a thing seen and a thing seeing, he asks Euthyphro if he understands how these and all such things are different. Euthyphro replies that he thinks he understands, and Socrates then adds one more example, which pertains

[57] An ironic statement considering the matter that is about to be addressed.

more directly to what he is referring : 'And isn't there also something loved and, different from this, the thing loving?' (10a4-11) Socrates is highlighting the difference between an agent acting upon a thing, and the patient being acted upon. He troubles to make explicit that the thing being acted upon—the carried, the led, or the seen—is carried, led, or seen because there is something else doing the acting (the carrying, the leading, the seeing), rather than because of some quality of being seen, carried, or led that is innate to that object (10b1-10). Still, it is important to notice that a thing must be portable to be carried, leadable to be led, visible to be seen—arguably none of which applies to gods.[58] Icons, on the other hand, can be carried, ceremonial processions can be led, embroidered robes can be seen. As for being loved, this presumes something 'loveable'. And with respect to 'lovability', there would seem to be a considerable difference between 'anthropomorphic gods' and, say, forms. And this is further complicated by the human imagination: loving something imaginary, and imagining oneself beloved by it. Thus, we must bear in mind that these acts have some dependence on the thing being acted upon. Socrates' analysis, however, treats the consequence of being seen, carried, led, or loved as altogether incidental to a particular being, as if it had nothing whatsoever to do with its '*ousia*' or 'thinghood' (11a9-11). Whereas, just as we should ask what makes something portable, leadable (sentience? docility?) or visible (corporeality?), we should ask what makes something loveable (beauty? benevolence? righteousness?). Socrates' focus is on the act of an agent, and on that act as 'the necessary precondition for and the sole cause of the state of being of the thing. The thing undergoes change, becomes something, acquires a property because of the act; and

[58] This points to the important question of the 'corporeality' of the gods.

the act is not done, does not come into being, because or for the reason that the thing is antecedently in that state or has that property'.[59] In every example, the very grammar of each clause suggests an act of agency[60]; the subject is causally responsible for acting upon an object.[61]

Using at least two forms of causal connection interchangeably, namely efficient cause (as an agent that affects a patient) and final cause (as Being affects becoming), Socrates demonstrates that a thing affected or coming into being can only be understood to be affected or coming into being in light of its being affected or coming to be something (10c1-6).[62] On the one hand, then, Euthyphro agrees that the effect of being loved is not something that belongs in a fundamental sense to the thing loved; being god-loved is not an essential characteristic, but rather merely a pathos. On the other hand, Socrates *also* leads Euthyphro to assert that the pious is loved because it is pious, not pious because it is loved,[63] suggesting that it is loved because it is in some way loveable or worthy of merit, which (in turn) must be

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[59] Versenyi, *Holiness and Justice*, 71

[60] Socrates makes use of passive participles (e.g., *pheromenon*, 'something carried').

[61] In the case of what is loved and what is seen, the actual effect of the subject acting upon the object is less clear since no movement is implied as it is with leading and carrying. Moreover, both seeing and loving can be (simultaneously) reciprocal, as carrying and leading cannot—which has implications for man-god relationships. (e.g., according to this definition, the gods love the pious, but isn't a man's love for the gods also an important consideration for understanding piety? He is pious because he loves the gods and wants their love in return?)

[62] By equating these two kinds of causality, Socrates blurs the possible distinction between something that is coming to be something and something that is affected by something else. Most significantly, he obscures the fact that an object coming to be something can be understood quite apart from the act of an agent or efficient cause. This is particularly important because, as we have seen, the grammar employed when using verbs and nouns implies efficient causality, which is a natural extension of how we humans understand our own action in the world. It is not a far leap to extend both what we understand of ourselves, and what is implicit in our language to our understanding of the cosmos. The very point that Socrates is about to make hinges on whether or not the gods should be understood as first or efficient causes, as the makers of what is pious, or whether there is not something prior to the gods that is not necessarily responsible for making or acting in the sense that men make and act.

[63] Although, initially, he asks Euthyphro to choose between the two.

accounted for (10d5-6).[64] On this account, 'the pious' is in some way prior to 'god-loved', 'in the sense of being the antecedent condition for a consequent one,...the reason for the other coming into being or becoming predicable of the thing'.[65]

But while the pious is loved because it is pious, 'just because it is loved by gods, it is something loved and god-loved' (10d5-9). As Cropsey points out, the two uses of 'because' are 'being used in mutually irrelevant senses'[66] but Socrates 'is content to draw the conclusion that the [pious] cannot without equivocation be defined as what the gods love'.[67] In short, 'the god-loved is not pious,' 'nor is the pious god-loved..., but the one is different from the other' (10d10-12).[68]

Euthyphro, failing to understand the implications of what has been said, or even what has been said simply, again asks Socrates for clarification. Socrates attempts to make what has been said more clear by repeating the two conflicting conclusions that they have reached. First, that the pious is loved because it is pious, and not pious because it is loved (10e2-3). And second, that the god-loved is such by the very fact that the gods love it, not loved because it is dear, or in simpler terms, loveable (10e4-6). If the pious and the god-loved were the same thing, then either the god-loved would have to be loved because of being loveable, as the pious is loved for being pious, or the pious would have to be pious because of being loved, as the god-loved is god-loved because it is loved (10e8-11a5). 'But as it is now,' Socrates goes on to say, 'you see that the two are opposite, since they are

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[64] This was also implied in Euthyphro's earlier definitions.
[65] Versenyi, *Holiness and Justice*, 71
[66] Versenyi suggests that the 'because' in the first sense is sufficiently ambiguous potentially to signify a 'logical, existential, causal or teleological connection between the clauses it connects' 70.
[67] Cropsey, "Euthyphro" in *Plato's World*, 65
[68] Socrates does not allow for the possibility that piety is *in* the *loving*, a possible interpretation of Euthyphro's definition, and a possibility simply.

entirely different from each other. For the one, because it is loved, it is the sort of thing to be loved; the other, because it is the sort of thing to be loved, is loved' (11a5-8).

Having agreed to this, Euthyphro is incapable of maintaining his definition; the 'pious' and the god-loved are as different as loved and loveable, two classes of things that are categorized in very different ways. Claiming that Euthyphro is not addressing the '*ousia*' or 'thinghood' of the pious, but rather an affection of it, or that which happens to it when it is affected, Socrates accuses him of not having yet said what the pious is.

Euthyphro is confused, and for good reason; Socrates has been tying him in logical knots throughout this section of the discussion. As noted earlier, Socrates disregards Euthyphro's art of divination after a certain point in the conversation and focuses instead on his wisdom (3e4). In this section of the argument, Euthyphro's art has reappeared, though it is never mentioned by name. If piety is to be defined strictly in terms of the gods, and more specifically in terms of the gods' love, then the only way for man to know the pious is through some kind of communication with the gods, through Revelation. This understanding of piety appears to be unavoidably circular: what is god-loved is pious and what is pious is god-loved. Any content to this definition relies on the expertise of diviners—men like Euthyphro, who as we have seen is so convinced of his wisdom, he is prepared to prosecute his father for murder on behalf of an unknown man, who himself is a murderer. But in the course of tying Euthyphro in these logical knots, Socrates reveals something about the character of Euthyphro's wisdom, and what Euthyphro

himself will accept as wisdom. Doubtless, Euthyphro would prefer an intelligible account of the pious; he is frustrated by the circularity (that may be inherent to his definition) revealed by this section of the argument, and desires that his suppositions be made secure and stable (11c8-d2).

By confusing Euthyphro as he has, Socrates leads Euthyphro, in a subtle way, to assert the primacy of Reason. While he had previously chosen to ignore Euthyphro's art, it is not until now that he can lead Euthyphro to reject the art of divination himself, and on his own terms. Because Euthyphro insists on a standard outside of the gods' will (the pious as pious), he reveals a contradiction in his way of life that he himself is unwilling to accept. In a sense, this is one of the most important things that Socrates can learn from Euthyphro. Socrates has chosen a life led by Reason rather than Revelation, and cannot easily determine whether he is in fact closed off to a superior way of life by virtue of the fact that he is not a diviner (though his daimonion certainly complicates this matter: what exactly is the status of Socrates' daimonion?). In observing Euthyphro's desire to overcome the circularity of his definition, he sees that Euthyphro himself finds problems with the lack of rational grounding inherent to his way of life, possibly inherent in Revelation-based life simply. Socrates' reason for tying Euthyphro in these knots may be for the sake of rejecting Revelation, both within the argument itself, and as a way of life itself satisfying for one of its proponents.[69] As a way out of this confusion, Euthyphro himself must make an appeal to the form of 'the pious', thus rejecting Revelation in its most extreme sense, and the definition of the pious that may be inherently circular.

[69] He does not, after all, learn from Euthyphro how 'to live better for the rest of [his] life' (16a4-5).

Euthyphro's responses in this section are rich in significance. While the argument is no doubt much more complicated than the following suggests, we see that if the gods love the pious in accordance with a standard of the pious outside of their will, then their will or love becomes quite superfluous. Moreover, their will or love *possibly* becomes explicable by light of natural reason—if, that is, the pious is rationally explicable. On the other hand, if the pious is pious in accordance with their loves, then there is no standard of the pious other than their love. While the first formulation of this definition (what is dear to the gods is pious), was attended by problems that arose from polytheism, this amendment of the definition (whatever *all* the gods loved is pious), is attended by problems that apply to both polytheism and monotheism alike. If the love of god is subject to change, then the pious changes in accordance with his changing loves. And since what is god-loved is not loved in accordance with any particular or intelligibly necessary standard of what is loveable, then the gods can theoretically love anything for any reason, or for no reason at all. In effect, then, there is no standard of the pious that men can feasibly know other than the will of god, which could, in theory, differ from day to day. Moreover, the problem lies specifically in knowing what that will is at any time. How is a god's will revealed?[70] This understanding would, in effect, leave

[70] The problem of prophecy stems from the problem of Revelation. How is one to know if the prophet/diviner is truly receiving communication from the gods? In most cases, the truth of the communication is proved in and through the truth of the predictions (i.e., the predictions come true). However, in this dialogue, we see that Euthyphro is not taken seriously despite the fact that (supposedly), 'of the things [he has] foretold, [he has] spoken nothing that is not true' (3c3-4). The real problem becomes, not whether to trust the gods, but whether to trust his (self) proclaimed messengers. As a conversation with a diviner, this dialogue seems to be a demonstration of how one is to test the supposed 'wisdom' of the prophet. Socrates appears to be testing Euthyphro's own belief in Revelation, as well as attempting to separate out what Euthyphro himself has read into his conception of 'the pious', as a possible means of separating imaginary wisdom from superhuman

man in fear and trembling. For though he would seek the love of god, that love would be unstable, and so pleasing a god would not provide a consistent standard for his own behavior, but would require continuous revelation (rather than a Revelation once and for all).[71] And this *is* a problem in the traditional stories about the gods: what is once loved can become hated, as we have seen with Kronos' example (8b1-6). Trying to please the gods, on this model, is rather like trying to please a fickle beloved.[72]

In accordance with this definition (that the pious is pious because it is loved), one can observe particular loves, but can find no standard by which to judge future loves. Instead of defining the pious, this conception substitutes one unknown (or mystery), what is god-loved, for another, the pious. The pious, then, has no content, lacking some sort of revelation. On this account, a particular religious tradition can provide no rationally discernible, rationally conclusive standard from which to judge pious or impious behavior. The tradition simply cannot be known (by purely human means) to be true, because there is no knowledge to be had about

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knowledge. And, we should note, the correct authority here is Reason. That is, the correct account must be rationally consistent.

[71] The question of whether the gods are willers and makers as opposed to knowers is one that has dominated theological scholarship in all traditions. If the gods are the first things, and are makers, (first causes and efficient causes) then the problem of their corporeality comes to the fore. In order to move things they must have body. The issue of the corporeality of the gods is raised in this dialogue, albeit subtly. Socrates' references to number, size and weight highlight this problem when we consider these questions in regard to the gods (7b6-d6; consider also that after going through what men do fight about, Socrates says, 'What about the gods, Euthyphro?' Rather than going on to say that men fight about the gods, however, he goes on to say that the gods fight about similar things. Nonetheless, the ambiguity of this sentence is meant to provoke the reader to consider the gods themselves as a subject of dispute). Also, his references to the poets and image-makers directly point to the fact that the form of the gods is spoken of and depicted. Less subtly, on the poets' accounts, the gods fight and kill and love, all of which are things that demand corporeality. Maimonides focuses on the question of the corporeality of God as one of the paramount questions concerning the Hebrew religion. If the God is embodied, then he is imperfect, and hence is a lover, whose will may change in accordance with his changing state. The same problem is addressed in Book II of *Republic*.

[72] Not unlike Socrates following his 'beloved' Euthyphro wherever he turns (14c4-5).

the Will of God, which moreover could change. If the gods are the first things, and are not subject to any intelligible necessity, as they could conceivably be if the pious were loved because it is pious, then there is no primacy of ideas and therefore no possibility of knowledge about their will, and about their creations (e.g., the universe), barring revelation. The gods on this model are not knowers. They are first causes and efficient causes moved by blind desire. And while we may in some capacity recognize something of the god's wisdom or of the 'rightness' of some of the god's desires for man, presuming they have been communicated (for example, the ten commandments), there could be no assurance that these commandments will remain desirable from the god's perspective.

If, on the other hand, the pious is loved because it is pious, there would be a standard from which to judge particulars, provided we had a substantial account of 'what the pious is'. Throughout the dialogue thus far, we have seen that Euthyphro, Meletus, and indeed the city, all behave in accordance with this presupposition. For the city's practical purposes, it has an established understanding of what is and is not pious. The fact that both Euthyphro and Meletus are charging others with impiety, and the fact that the city holds trials on the basis of such charges, attests to a widespread agreement that something substantial and permanent can be known with regard to pious and impious behavior (i.e., it is a virtue). They are also in agreement that impiety leads to bad effects, and is therefore bound up with man's good (e.g., Socrates corrupts through impiety, and Euthyphro fears the consequences of his own pollution through tolerating his father's act).[73] Moreover, the fact that Euthyphro claims to have wisdom about the divine things and the pious

[73] Strangely, however, the word 'virtue' is not used, even once, in this dialogue.

and impious things,[74] that he insists on consistency (6a), and that both he and Socrates demand it in regard to their definitions (6e10-9b3; 9e3-9) points to a belief in rationality as the necessary means to knowing anything about which there can possibly be knowledge. When the insistence on rationality is abandoned, so too is the need for consistency, and indeed, the possibility of knowledge is precluded.[75]

Any claim to knowledge about the pious points to the pious as something prior to its being loved. By this account, the gods play no role in determining what the pious is because knowledge of something suggests that what is known is prior to the act of knowing. Accordingly, if there can be knowledge about the pious, then the gods must not be the first things; there may be something prior to the gods (e.g., the forms) that man perhaps can know even if the gods differ, do not know, or even do not exist. What follows from this is that the gods' knowing cannot be a kind of making; what is known, the first things, would neither be made nor makers.[76] Were they either of these things, they would take on the same status as do the gods when posited as first things. In order for there to be knowledge, there has to be something permanent that does not 'make' and is not 'made'.

If there is knowledge of something permanent to be had, and if we can imagine the gods as knowers rather than makers (of first things, that is; they could be makers of subsidiary things by virtue of their knowledge), we see that they

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[74] Socrates, on the other hand, makes no claim to know the divine things and the pious things, nor does he deny any guilt in the corruption and impiety charge (it is Euthyphro who denies Socrates' guilt). Moreover, he claims that he would 'certainly not' bring a lawsuit against another man, which perhaps signifies that he is unwilling to cast judgments without certain knowledge. He does, however, express annoyance with the traditional stories about the gods, indicating, perhaps, that he has 'some' knowledge about the divinities, even if that knowledge is only negative.

[75] This is not to deny the very deep issue concerning the 'autonomy' and/or 'sufficiency of Reason' (i.e., does it require 'faith'?).

[76] See Leo Strauss, *On the Euthyphron,* in "The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism", 200.

would not be susceptible to changing their loves (or to the 'unworthy' requests and prayers of impious men, for that matter). They would love and favor men or actions only if they were pious, and piety would unquestionably be a virtue. But even if the gods, as knowers, happened to love everything that they saw as pious, the fact of their love would not be enough to determine that love as a necessary consequent of the pious; theoretically, it is possible that they would not encounter certain pious things, and accordingly would not love all pious things. Moreover, in *Euthyphro* the gods have not been determined as knowers (quite the contrary), and so there is no necessary connection between their love and the pious, because there is no guarantee that they will know what the pious is. Nor is there any guarantee that the gods love only the pious. The gods, then, as neither makers of what is loved, nor as knowers of what is loveable, become superfluous. Man is better off seeking to know the pious on his own. But this is no sooner said than one realizes there may be no such thing. If there are no gods for man to stand in relation to, providing the very paradigm of piety, does it make any sense to speak of piety at all? Is there another way of understanding piety?

Returning to the text, we should note that in examining Euthyphro's initial amendment to his second definition, we see that he did not say that the pious is what is loved by the gods, rather the pious is *whatever* all the gods love (9e1-3), thus introducing a third thing (e.g., punitive justice) by which the gods' love and the pious are joined. Feasibly, then, justice could be pious, virtue could be pious, so too nobility, the good, and so on. Punitive justice, to use Euthyphro's own example, is loved by the gods and is therefore pious. But because Socrates has Euthyphro

conclude that the pious cannot be defined by the love of the gods (although it can—this was never really excluded), then the fact that the gods love the just means that justice is also something that cannot be defined by the love of the gods. In this particular instance, their love does not make punitive justice either just or pious. It may be just—this would require an examination of the form of justice—but we see here that Euthyphro's middle term, the gods' love, which was connecting punitive justice and the pious, has been severed.[77] While we can recognize the logical validity of what Socrates has demonstrated to Euthyphro, we must also examine the psychological significance of Euthyphro's definition, including what must change in accordance with what has been concluded.

In linking punitive justice and the pious via the middle term of the gods' love, Euthyphro seems to be pointing to the gods as a kind of cosmic support for, or guardians of, justice (i.e., they punish the pollution of injustice, 'however' they do it). Piety, in being linked to punitive justice, gains a moral significance beyond gratitude, which is likely the more common understanding of piety. Piety, on these terms, demands the enforcement of justice; it is further support of justice. As such, the implication is that injustice is not a bad in itself (or, at the very least, not sufficiently so as to be self-enforcing); it needs to be punished by something 'external' in order to be seen or felt as (sufficiently) bad. Similarly, justice is not sufficiently good in itself, but being just is a means of avoiding bad things (i.e. punishment) and gaining good things (rewards). Because piety is linked to justice

[77] The link will be restored in the next section, but on new grounds. Only then can the form of justice be inquired into—though Socrates does not do this. In re-establishing the link, Socrates preserves Euthyphro's desire to read a moral significance into piety, but in a way that the pious does not burden or prejudice the investigation into the just.

through the love of the gods, the just, therefore pious, man wins the love and favor of the gods, and therefore will avoid bad things (i.e., punishment). Insofar as he is ruled by the rational pursuit of his own good, that is. This psychological longing for divine support of justice shall be further addressed by Socrates in the subsequent section, but for now we can see that the severing of the pious and the love of the gods represents a significant attack on Euthyphro's understanding of the cosmos.[78] For the first time we see him react with clear frustration. The conclusion of this part of the argument ends in an impasse, which marks the transition to the next section, where Euthyphro's desire to maintain the moral significance of piety will be preserved but profoundly transformed.

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[78] Although throughout the dialogue Euthyphro's definitions and actions have implied that he believes the pious is loved because it is pious, his belief in the gods as efficient causes, as the lovers and enforcers of justice, points to a conflict in his reasoning. If the gods must enforce justice, and punish it, then it is not self-evidently loveable, or cannot be known as good outside the standard of its being loved by gods (if men can know justice as loveable in itself, they need not concern themselves with gods). On this model, the gods act as efficient causes (punishers) in the event that men don't recognize what is loveable or what is just, since what is loveable in itself would conceivably act upon men as being acts upon what is becoming, as, for example, we might feel ourselves to be ruled by reason (not as an agent acts upon an object; compare the two alternatives at 10c7-8). This is conceivably a fine scenario, and would fit with the idea that the gods are the givers of every good (15a), but if gods are mistaken about what is just, they may mistakenly punish men, and therefore be the cause of what is bad (and then all hope is lost). The fact that Euthyphro wants to punish his father, and believes that the gods do as well, suggests that he does not think that justice is truly loveable because he does not think that injustice is truly hateful; it needs the added badness of being punished. Or, at the very least, justice is not the only good thing (i.e., material goods and those things that are likely to cause arguments over just distribution and so on). Because he desires good things apart from justice, as all men do, he is fond of the idea of the gods as efficient causes, and quite un-fond of the idea that the gods are superfluous, hence his visible irritation at the conclusion of this section of the argument. As efficient causes that love the pious, the gods, being lovers of the pious Euthyphro, would be in a position to give him good things. Euthyphro, as lover and willer, sees the gods as more powerful lovers and willers, and potentially as agents that can secure *his* loves. His first two definitions implied that he wanted them to love justice because it is just and to love the pious because it was pious, but also to be available as efficient causes, so that they can 'cosmically' support justice in assuring that he, the pious and just Euthyphro, get what he deserves. The alternative: a godless world of chance with no guarantee that being just or pious will lead the way to other recognizable goods.

(iv) Aporia: Socrates as Daedalus (11b2-e2)

Socrates brings this section of the dialogue to a close by saying, with a pun, that if it 'dear to you', 'say again [Euthyphro] from the beginning what ever the pious is, whether it is loved by gods or however it is affected—for we won't differ about this—but tell me eagerly, what are the pious and the impious' (11b2-5). Notice—the impious has once more entered the discussion, and by implication, the 'non-pious' as well. Euthyphro hesitates, clearly frustrated, 'But Socrates, I have no way of telling you what I have in mind. For whatever we put forward somehow always keeps going around for us and isn't willing to stay where we place it' (11b6-8).

Claiming that the things said by Euthyphro are likely to belong to their ancestor Daedalus, Socrates denies that the problems have any connection to his father's art[79] (Sophronisius, like Daedalus, was a statuary). He goes on: 'But as it is now, the suppositions are yours, and some other gibe is needed. For they aren't willing to stay still for you, as it seems to you yourself as well' (11c5-7). Euthyphro disagrees, claiming 'as to their going around and not staying in the same place, *I* didn't put them up to it. Rather, *you* seem to me the Daedalus, since, as far as I'm concerned, they would stay as they were' (11c9-d2).

While Socrates identifies the content of speech with whether or not claims are willing to stay where someone sets them down, Euthyphro implies that it is not the content, but rather the method that is responsible for such motion. Socrates' response, that 'probably, comrade, I have become more clever at the art than that

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[79] In *Theaetaetus*, the dialogue that immediately precedes this one, Socrates identifies himself with his mother's art of midwifery.

man, insofar as he made only his own things not stay still, while I, besides my own things, also do this to those of others, as is likely' (11d3-6), seems to imply that he accepts Euthyphro's accusation. But again, he focuses on the content of speech as the reason for motion, claiming that 'the most exquisite part of the art is that I am involuntarily wise. For I would wish rather for the speeches to stay still for me and to be placed unmoved' (11d6-8). That is, he would wish for his suppositions to be unmoved, suggesting that if the suppositions were in fact true they would remain where they were placed, fastened down by reasons that bind them to a rational account of the whole.

Socrates' statements by no means imply that his method has nothing to do with the displacement of propositions put forth in speech; as we have seen his method has an undeniable effect. Euthyphro's speeches would have remained stationary for him had Socrates not insisted on examining all of his claims. But we must also consider the motivation for Socrates' examination. Socrates professes to know nothing of the divine things, but has nonetheless always regarded it as important to know the divine things. Euthyphro, on the other hand, has always been convinced of his wisdom. He has never questioned his wisdom because he has never had its instability demonstrated prior to his conversing with Socrates. In blaming Socrates for unsettling his religious 'certainties'—and by implication, his other beliefs—Euthyphro becomes a stand-in for the city, which will try Socrates on charges of corruption of youth and religious innovation based on his teaching.

Socrates highlights, in his final statement on the motion of speech in this section, the true reason for his act of moving speeches, an involuntary wisdom by

his account. 'I would rather for the speeches to stay still for me and to be placed unmoved, than, in addition to the wisdom of Daedalus, to get the money of Tantalus' (11d7-e2). His end is not the fame of a legendary maker and inventor, much less money,[80] but rather it is for his speeches to be firmly grounded. In conceding that he is responsible, albeit involuntarily, for setting both his and others' speeches in motion, Socrates in a sense contradicts what he had said earlier. He first claimed that it was Euthyphro who was responsible for his own suppositions, and thereby for their motion. Here, however, he admits that both others' and his own speeches are put in motion by him. His Daedalean wisdom may be involuntary, but he knows why, how, and when it works. His awareness of the effect of his probing into the speeches of his interlocutors is something we must take into account as we proceed, and as we consider the charges against him, which loom darkly in the background of this conversation.

[80] (Pindar, *Olympian*, I.55-64) It is quite unclear what we should make of the mention of Tantalus' name. Proverbial for his wealth, King Tantalus, son of Zeus, was admitted to the gods' company, whereupon he stole their food and distributed it to his fellow men. He also is charged with having cut up his son, Pelops, and having served his flesh to the gods when they came to dine with him. For these crimes he was punished by being hung from a tree just beyond reach of food and water. If philosophy is being associated with the art of Daedalus, perhaps it is also being associated with the eternal 'tantalization' of Tantalus, who could see what he desired but could never reach it—his punishment for contending with and tricking the gods. After all, Socrates says that he does not want the wealth of Tantalus, saying nothing of Tantalus' status with the gods.

IV. New Beginning: Third Attempt at a Formal Definition (11e3-16a5)

(i) Is all the just pious or is all the pious just?; piety is tendance of the gods (11e3-12e9)

As noted in Part III. iii, Euthyphro's earlier attempts at defining the pious revealed a psychological longing for the cosmic support of justice. In the section of the argument dealing with the question of whether the pious is loved because it is pious, or pious because it is loved, Socrates appeared to sever the connection between the pious and punitive justice in the course of severing the pious from the gods' love. He had Euthyphro agree that the pious is loved because it is pious, an assertion that resulted in an impasse from which the two must now recover (since this still leaves the pious unexplained). But rather than asking Euthyphro to 'say again from the beginning whatever the pious is' (11b2-3), Socrates changes his tactics. *'But enough of this. Since you seem to me to be fastidious (truphan)*[81]*, I myself will take an eager part in showing you how you may teach me about the pious. And don't get tired out before the end. See if it doesn't seem necessary to you that all the pious is just' (11e3-6).* This change in approach is important to note. Socrates is now becoming more active in 'showing' Euthyphro how he can teach him. In this respect, he becomes the teacher of his 'teacher'. Another significant change to note is Socrates' tone. While previously he had himself been quite delicate in dealing with the 'fastidious' Euthyphro, praising him and 'respectfully' deferring to his wisdom (6a10-b2), his tone here is assertive ('And don't get tired out before the end'), and will steadily grow more so throughout the remainder of

[81] Or 'soft', 'delicate', 'effeminate', hence 'to give oneself airs'.

the dialogue. While he continues to praise him, the praise becomes more obviously ironic, and is mixed with a certain amount of derision. It seems that now that Socrates has been successful in reducing Euthyphro to frustration—even to a kind of ignorance ('But Socrates, I have no way of telling you what I have in mind'; 11b6-7)—he is prepared to guide Euthyphro more actively through his next attempts at defining the pious. Apparently having eliminated the need for Revelation (by having Euthyphro agree that the pious is loved because pious, not pious because loved), Socrates is ready to introduce Euthyphro to various ways classes of things can be related. Moreover, now that he has confused Euthyphro about the connection between the pious and punitive justice, and has apparently dispensed with the third term in Euthyphro's definition that previously joined these two things (the gods' love), he can re-establish the relationship between piety and justice, but this time on his own terms. That is, he is willing to preserve Euthyphro's psychological longing for the moral significance of piety, but on new grounds—grounds that will radically limit the domain of piety.

Socrates marks this 'new beginning' (cf. 11b3) by initiating a new approach to the question, asking Euthyphro 'if it doesn't seem necessary to [him] that all the pious is just' (11e5-6). Euthyphro responds as we would expect, 'To me it does'. Socrates goes on: 'And is all the just pious? Or is the pious all just, while the just is not all pious, but part of it is pious, part something else?' Notice that the first of these two alternatives is never discussed[82]. Socrates prejudices Euthyphro's

[82] We should be cautious, however, about dismissing this possibility simply because we might today associate it with religious extremism. In rejecting the obvious problems with this notion, we may also reject the subtleties of this position. It may be that Euthyphro's extreme version of piety is in some way mirroring a more common notion of piety, and in particular its connection to justice. That

responses with his list of examples, switching back and forth between awe and dread and even and odd, leading him to assert that all of the pious is just. This second alternative, that all of the pious is just, but not all the just is pious, is agreed upon but also never discussed thoroughly. For example, it is never considered that according to this taxonomical model, every act of piety is a dictate of justice, including even such acts as kneeling to pray. Euthyphro fails to 'follow what is being said', and again Socrates derides him while, at the same time, managing to encourage him and to praise him ironically: 'And yet you are no less younger than I am than you are wiser.[83] But as I say, you are being fastidious because of your wealth of wisdom. Come, you blessed man, exert yourself, for it isn't even hard to understand what I am saying' (11e7-12a7). By way of clarifying his statement, he makes reference to an unnamed poet, saying that he [Socrates] is saying the opposite of what the 'maker made who made'[84] this:

> Zeus, the one who enclosed and planted all these things
> You are not willing to speak of; for where dread is, there too is
> awe (12a9-b2).[85]

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is, Euthyphro derives his politics from his view of the cosmos, as many others do, only he appears to be willing to take his understanding of piety to an extreme level of 'commitment'. Socrates may be subtly pointing to a kind of piety that attends *all* notions of justice. It may be that all moralities are accompanied by a 'pious' belief in that particular morality and in a metaphysical system that supports that morality—even those that are not rooted in a particular conception of the gods. In light of this, the idea that 'all the just is pious' takes on new meaning.

[83] This remark seems to invite a comparison of Meletus and Euthyphro; consider 2c1-d1.

[84] This is a more literal rendering of the translator's 'what the poet composed who said'. The 'makers' and their 'making' is a constant theme throughout the dialogue. Socrates himself is charged with being a 'maker' of gods (3b1-4), he 'makes' other like himself (3d1), the poets 'make' the stories about the gods (6b10), the painters 'make' images of the gods on sacred things (6c1), sacred things are made (i.e., the robe for the Panathenaea) and Daedalus 'makes' statues (11b10-e2; 15b7-c2).

[85] These lines may belong to Stasinus, a post-Homeric poet who is said to have written an epic poem (lost to us) about the events of the Trojan War that preceded the events of the *Iliad*.

Offering to tell Euthyphro how he differs with the poet, Socrates addresses only the second part of the verse: 'It doesn't seem to me that "where dread is, there too is awe." For many seem to me to dread when they dread diseases and poverty and many other such things, but to be in awe of none of these things that they dread'.[86] While the poet's saying does not explicitly state that the things for which men have awe are necessarily the very same things that they dread, the ambiguity of the phrase is sufficient to support Socrates' stated interpretation. Still, the quote would seem to imply that men both fear and have awe for *Zeus*, the planter of 'all these things', not necessarily that they have dread for *all other things* of which they are in awe. But Socrates ignores the double presence of dread and awe in the 'god-fearing' man by ignoring the first half of the quote. He removes the gods from the discussion, and so alters the intended meaning of the quote, thereby freeing himself to make use of the 'mistaken' quote as he desires. As to why Socrates chose to ignore the gods, and as to why he chose to cite a (supposedly) *mistaken* poet, quoting lines that he acknowledges illustrate the *opposite* of what he claims he wishes to show, rather than poems of other poets that could have directly and validly illustrated his point, are two more puzzles we are challenged to make sense of. If we add to the list the oddity of Socrates' quoting a poet who is speaking about dread and awe, as opposed to justice and piety (of which his original question is about), we are faced with three interesting puzzles. And, as in all interpretive questions, we must consider Socrates' intended outcome, which requires a closer look at this section of the argument.

[86] Not incidentally, these are typical subjects of prayer.

To Socrates' question concerning awe and dread of certain particular things, Euthyphro agrees; men do not have awe for disease and poverty and other such things. Socrates then apparently reverses the order of priority of the two phenomena, claiming that "'where awe is, there too is dread." For doesn't anyone who feels awe and shame in some matter also fear and dread a reputation for villainy?'[87] Again, Euthyphro agrees: 'Of course he dreads it'. We should here note the addition of both shame and fear to Socrates' explanation, for it figures importantly in his upcoming taxonomy. That is, what appears to be a two-fold taxonomy may in fact be a three or four-fold taxonomy. It is especially important to note these two additions, since later Socrates will admonish Euthyphro to 'dread' the gods, saying nothing of awe, and to have shame before his fellow human beings,[88] saying nothing of dread or fear. We should, therefore, be hesitant to accept his upcoming taxonomy without further scrutiny.[89]

Socrates concludes that "where awe is, there too is dread"—not, however, "wherever dread is, everywhere is awe". Before moving on, we should pause in order to examine Socrates' claim. And, upon further consideration, it does not

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[87] Cf. 15de, where dread is related to gods, shame to humans. Consider also that Socrates seems to emphasize human awe for justice (no god or human being dares to say that the doer of injustice ought not to pay the penalty), whereas Euthyphro appears to emphasize dread of punishment; 8b10-e8. Ironically, Euthyphro does not seem to dread a reputation for villainy, at least among men.

[88] Perhaps Socrates is implying that shame belongs to the realm that deals with human matters, as awe does to the realm that deals with the 'tendance' of gods.

[89] For example, the fact that we might understand awe as something potentially distinct from dread, having its own domain, may be an indication that piety does not necessarily have to be placed under the purview of justice (as we are invited to analogize the relationship between dread and awe to that between justice and piety). We may understand this in terms of alternative political taxonomies, as for example, piety can be separate from the legal concerns of a city. This taxonomy would seem to be represented by the modern liberal democracy, which advocates the separation of church and state. The view that Socrates is opposing would seem to be something akin to a theocracy, where justice is placed under the purview of piety (as awe is the more comprehensive class to which dread belongs, thereby inviting us to consider piety as a larger class to which justice belongs). This taxonomy is in line with Euthyphro's view because he subjects the demands of justice (as he understands them) to the more comprehensive demands of piety (as he understands it).

appear to be true—we can have awe and shame for things without the accompanying dread of bad reputation. Euthyphro, in agreeing with Socrates, fails to acknowledge that one can feel shame and awe quite apart from concerns for reputation, and quite apart from dread. Indeed, one can feel shame or awe about certain things or actions regardless of whether anyone else knows about those actions. For example, about time ill-used, about excesses of pleasure such as food or drink, about betrayal of friends, and so on. Additionally, dread of reputation is not the only kind of dread experienced in tandem with awe. For example, one might have both awe for and dread for the gods, as suggested by the poet (though the two *may* be incidentally simultaneous). So, the relationship that Socrates next draws between the two phenomena is, perhaps, flawed. He suggests, "awe is part of dread, just as 'odd' is part of number. Hence not "wherever 'number' is, there too is 'odd'", but "where 'odd' is, there too is 'number'".

By introducing number, Socrates is introducing the idea of a 'part to whole' relationship; the genus of 'number' can, in the most comprehensive sense, be divided into two sub-species: 'even' and 'odd'. Similarly, he implies dread, as the more comprehensive class, can be divided into two subsets: awe (the odd), and something else (the even; because he has introduced shame into the conversation, we may be invited to consider 'shame' as the 'even'). Socrates' dispute with the poet appears to be well-founded (as dread of poverty and disease is found in the absence of awe), but as we have seen, it appears to be true also that awe is found in the absence of dread. What, then, is Socrates doing? Here we are faced with a fourth interpretive question: why did Socrates not attempt to reveal to Euthyphro a

relationship that displayed (merely) partial overlap between the two psychic phenomena, but also mutual exclusivity in regard to certain experiences (e.g., poverty and disease, but also private shame without consequence, or perhaps awe for beauty without dread, as in the observance of a statue of a god)?

Let us consider, then, what Socrates might be doing. Firstly, Socrates speaks of the two phenomena (dread and awe) in their generalities, establishing a relation between the two akin to that between 'number' and 'odd', perhaps thereby lessening the chance that his final statements on piety and justice will be disputed.[90] Socrates next invites a comparison between awe and piety on the one hand, and between dread and justice on the other (12c10-d4). The poetic context seems to invite the consideration that, as dread gives rise to awe, justice may give rise to piety.[91] What may be intended by the poet, that dread causes awe in regard to the *gods*, is interpreted by Socrates to mean that we are in awe of *everything* that we dread. This understanding very easily gives rise to the view that piety is all-encompassing, and that, as Euthyphro's earlier view suggested, *everything* is either pious or impious.

If we consider Euthyphro's own example in light of this causal model, we might conjecture that his dread of divine punishment is in some way responsible for his awe of the gods, not conversely, that his awe of the gods gives rise to his dread of punishment (he *fears* pollution and the attending punishment, that fear of gods leading to awe of the gods and their power, resulting in 'pious' behavior). In this case, then, dread is primary or prior, and awe follows from dread, just as (we are

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[90] After all, men do not dispute much about number; c.f. 7b7-c1.
[91] Bruell, Christopher, *Euthyphro*, in "On the Socratic Education", 132.

invited to consider) concerns for piety follow from apparent concerns for justice.[92] Socrates' dispute with the poet, then, appears to be an indirect way of calling into question the relationship that Euthyphro himself believes to exist between piety and justice. He begins with awe and dread so that he may show clearly how there can be dread without awe, and then in comparing these two phenomena to piety and justice, he can have Euthyphro agree that there can be justice without piety, without having to address this relationship head on. In quoting a mistaken poet, Socrates can challenge Euthyphro's view without directly challenging Euthyphro himself. Thus, Socrates demonstrates a subtle, if not sneaky, way of securing Euthyphro's agreement without engaging his vanity—his vain pride in his religious expertise being a potential obstacle to his agreement. This approach and this goal would seem to provide partial answers to our first three interpretive questions. Socrates first removed the gods from the context of the poet's lines in order to distance the conversation from the realm of Euthyphro's 'expertise'. Socrates chose to speak of awe and dread rather than piety and justice so as to establish a model relationship to compare to the relationship between piety and justice without, again, engaging Euthyphro on the topic he claims to know most of all human beings. And, Socrates chose to quote a mistaken poet so that he could challenge Euthyphro's similarly mistaken view (which bears a close resemblance), without engaging him directly. In this way, Socrates can 'help' Euthyphro reach certain conclusions, for example,

[92] We say 'apparent' here, because it may be that the root of the concerns for justice are selfish, and so easily perverted, but nonetheless *perceived* to be concerns for justice, not self-interest. For example, Euthyphro wants favor from the gods, which he sees as his just desert because he is 'pious'. *He* understands his own concern with punishment to be a concern with justice.

that piety is a part of justice, without actively and obviously undermining what he claims to know.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that Socrates successfully undermines Euthyphro's belief that every concern of justice is at once a concern of piety, his reversal of the relationship introduces a new problem, one that recalls our fourth interpretive question. That is, the relationship between justice and piety that Socrates introduces through his paralleled numerical taxonomy, suggests that all pious actions are dictates of justice, to the extent that even kneeling to pray, or folding one's hands a certain way, becomes a concern of justice. In doing so, Socrates ignores the possibility that there are things or concerns or experiences that involve awe and piety, but that do not involve dread and justice. Moreover, it would appear that, if justice is like number, and all things can be counted and therefore in some way included in the taxonomy of number, then Socrates is suggesting that *all things* are matters of justice. Having said this, however, Socrates may subtly call into question this notion when he introduces a separate taxonomy: that of triangle:

> If the pious is part of the just, then we need to discover, as is likely, what part of the just the pious would be. Now, if you were asking me about one of the things mentioned just now, such as what part of number is the even and what this number happens to be[93], I would say, "whatever is not scalene but rather isosceles (12d6-11).

As noted earlier, number is a genus, and can be divided into the two sub-species, 'even' and 'odd'—each being of equal extent. There may be further distinctions within these two sub-classes, such as primes within the 'odd' sub-class, but all

[93] Choosing to take up number rather than awe and dread, Socrates uses the easier, meaning less controversial example to illustrate his point. In choosing to address the neutral class of 'number' and its sub-classes, rather than awe and dread, Socrates subtly does away with Euthyphro's potentially harmful prejudice that 'piety' is higher than 'justice', a necessary step to freeing punitive justice from the demands of piety. As noted, the terms 'even' and 'odd' bisect the world of number in the most general or comprehensive way, but not in an hierarchical way.

numbers must be either 'even' or 'odd'. Taken together, these two sub-classes constitute a class that they are not on their own: number in its comprehensibility or multiplicity.

Likewise, isosceles and scalene triangles are particular kinds of triangles that, when taken together, form a larger class: that of triangle [94] But, triangle is itself a part of a higher class, the genus of (geometrical) 'figure'. In comparing justice to number, Socrates would seem to be implying that justice is the most comprehensive genus, to which many subspecies and subsets belong. The difference between the two analogies would seem to be, most importantly, that everything can be counted, but that not everything is this or that kind of triangle. What we must ask, then, is, is the relationship between piety and justice more like number or more like triangle? That is, is *everything* either 'pious' or something else, the 'even', and therefore *everything* is a concern of justice, or are *particular* things either pious or something else and therefore just, as *particular* figures are

[94] By speaking of the two classes of number, even and odd, as being either scalene (that which when bisected forms unequal parts) or isosceles (that which when bisected forms equal parts), Socrates invites us to imagine the difference between odd and even without making direct reference to particular numbers. He has us imagine the two most general categories of number without counting, and he has us imagine triangles without drawing. Because we grasp what he is saying in the absence of particular examples, the suggestion is that there is an idea that underlies these distinctions that is prior to their particular instantiations. Likewise, he asks Euthyphro about justice and piety, asking him to establish their relationship quite apart from any consideration of particular examples. This does not, however, mean that any of these things can be understood without some investigation into particulars. We need particular examples of numbers in order to establish their relationships, and we need particular examples of piety and its' 'opposite' in order to ask what the pious is. These classes, then, remain connected to multiplicity. Socrates himself used examples of dread and awe to establish their relationship, and indeed, Socrates' claim is that he wants to learn from Euthyphro what the pious is so that he may learn for himself, in addition to showing Meletus, that he (a particular) has not been acting impiously. The idea is to be used as a pattern from which to judge particulars (6e5). Also worthy of note is that this classificatory model seems to point to a particular relationship between 'forms'. If justice is a form (it is never treated as such in this dialogue) and if piety is a form (they never arrive at this form in this dialogue), then the relationship between the two is one of part to whole. One form, justice, is thus made up of other forms (piety and something else, the 'even') that when taken together constitute something that they are not on their own.

triangles (and as squares and circles are not). Is justice itself part of a larger class (perhaps, for example, the good[95])?

Understandably, Euthyphro does not notice the subtleties of Socrates' taxonomies, agreeing that piety, like the 'even', is isosceles. By comparing piety and justice to particular taxonomical models, and by blurring the distinction between the two, Socrates is exploiting Euthyphro's prejudice about the connection between justice and piety so as to have him acknowledge piety as a sub-class of justice, so that, on its own, piety does not comprise the entire domain of that which falls under the purview of justice.[96] And this is, in fact, what happens: Euthyphro ends up asserting that the part of justice that piety comprehends is confined to that which deals with the tendance of gods —content perhaps with the implication that, based on the 'number analogy', it is of 'equal' extent to that of the strictly human part.

According to this understanding, that which deals with the tendance of human beings is as different from piety as is even from odd, but also as similar, both being numbers, and both being concerns of justice. Accordingly, Euthyphro's practical concern for the link between piety and justice, his prosecution of his father for the death of a hired man, is—according to this formulation—'exiled' from the realm of *piety* altogether.[97] The poetic context of the lines from the 'mistaken' poet

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[95] Every just thing would then be good, but not all good things would be just.

[96] For a very interesting discussion of how the forms may come together to form 'the whole' in a similar way as odd and even come together to form the more comprehensive class of number, see Klein, Jacob, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra,*, and in particular chapter 7.C, pp.79ff.

[97] We might consider how Euthyphro's assumptions about the cosmos, those that inform his view of justice, and in particular punitive justice, have been seriously limited in this formulation of the relation between piety and justice. His piety—informed by his cosmological view—is transformed in nature, because it is now asserted to be a subclass of justice. As such, piety must be understood as

suggested that awe is the necessary companion of dread in regard to the gods, and therefore, according to Socrates' invited comparison between awe and piety and dread and justice (after having ignored Zeus' role in the poet's statement), that piety is the necessary companion of justice. Socrates, as we see here, differs most profoundly from him in that piety does not *necessarily* follow from any and every concern for justice, and in particular it is disconnected from the strictly human matters having to do with justice, such as punishment administered by political authority.[98] The great difference between the two, the poet and the philosopher, then, is the difference in their understanding of the relationship between the two phenomena,[99] and as we see, this difference is intimately connected to Socrates' end of severing the pious from punitive justice.[100]

The domain of piety, then, is limited by this prototype of Euthyphro's second formal definition: piety is the tendance of the gods. But just as the realm of piety contracts, our conception of piety expands with the re-introduction of

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a concern of justice, or a particular part of justice. Justice, per se, is no longer a concern of piety, or derived from one's understanding of the gods. This is a massive, yet wondrously subtle critique of the problem of deriving one's politics from one's assumptions about the cosmos, and of letting those assumptions govern one's approach to politics. Socrates, unlike Euthyphro, appears to begin with what is apparent, with the actual phenomena of justice as it presents itself, in his assessment of justice (consider 7c8-e9), not with assumptions about the gods ('Is this, Euthyphro, why I am a defendant against the indictment: that whenever someone says such things about the gods, I receive them somehow with annoyance?').

[98] We ought to consider if Socrates' own 'impiety' falls under the purview of justice. That is, does his alleged 'impiety' violate the taxonomy he has set forth here? Consider in this light, *Apology* 26b2-28a.

[99] The modern state would seem to differ quite profoundly from Plato's view on this, if this is Plato's genuine view of the proper relationship between justice and piety. That we separate the church and state gives rise to a distinctly different political taxonomy. Piety is not included under the purview of justice in the sense that piety is not a legal obligation (though of course pious people and organized religions are still subject to law). We moderns would also seem to dispute that justice is correctly understood in terms of the numerical taxonomy, as, for some amongst us, quite obviously justice is not as comprehensive as it is suggested to be here. Not everything is a matter of justice, because justice is conventional (defined by the law, leaving us free to behave as we like wherever the law is 'silent').

[100] This is not meant to suggest that what Socrates says is solely aimed at dissuading Euthyphro from his trial, or that he does not believe what he has said to Euthyphro.

reverence. Following from Socrates' cue ('try to teach me what part of the just is pious, so that we may also tell Meletus not to do injustice to us any longer and not to indict us for irreverence, on the ground that we have already learned sufficiently from you the things both reverent and pious and the things not'; 12e1-5),[101] Euthyphro claims that the part of the just that is 'reverent *as well* as pious' is that which 'concerns the tendance of the gods' (12e6-9; my emphasis). The words 'reverence' and 'irreverence' have not occurred in the dialogue for quite some time. Their only previous occurrences were in the context of Socrates first asking Euthyphro to become his teacher in order to escape Meletus' impending prosecution (5c8). There, he referred to both piety and reverence, seemingly interchangeably. But from that point on, the term 'reverence' (*eusebes*) was not used, as the two men have focused exclusively on 'the pious' throughout the conversation. Here, however, Socrates has re-introduced the word, again in the context of speaking about his trial. *More specifically, he has re-introduced the word in the context of speaking about discouraging Meletus from his prosecution against him (that prosecution being an injustice insofar as Socrates will have supposedly learned the things pious; 12e2-3), this time making clear that reverence is distinct from the pious (mentioning 'both'). The sub-class of justice, that which is concerned with the tendance of gods, then, is not one thing but a multiplicity. It involves both reverence and piety, which prompts the reader to ask about the precise relationship between these two things. This part of justice, equated with 'even', can after all, as*

[101] This statement ought to be considered in light of what Socrates says at the center of the dialogue—that no man dare say that he ought not to pay the penalty when having committed an injustice. The fact that Socrates claims that he should not pay the penalty, but rather be taught, may be an indication that he does not see his actions as constituting an injustice. On the other hand, he may see Meletus' accusation as unjust.

Socrates said, be broken into equal parts. It is not clear, however, if reverence is one of the equal parts that come together to form piety as a more general class, or if piety and reverence come together themselves to constitute a more general class. It is not clear, therefore, whether Socrates' crime, if it is one of irreverence, it is also one of impiety.

Having said all of this, we must nonetheless consider the fact that awe, as opposed to piety, was earlier equated with 'odd'. Because of this, and because shame is later raised in regard to human things (15d8-9), there may be a kind of reverence also that attends the human things, such as reverence for parents, laws and so on. For the moment, this distinction does not appear to be that important, as the tendance of the gods still remains under the greater class of justice, thereby suggesting that both impiety and irreverence may legitimately constitute an injustice. Of course, so too then, may the failure to kneel when praying.

(ii) Animal tendance| tendance of masters| Euthyphro refuses to answer| piety as prayer and sacrifice (12e10-14c4)

Socrates is pleased with Euthyphro's partitioning of the just: 'And what you say appears noble (i.e., not necessarily true) to me, Euthyphro, but I am still in need of a little something. For I don't yet comprehend which tendance you are naming'. He explains, 'Surely you aren't saying that that concerning the gods is of the same sort as the tendances concerning other things—for surely we do speak of them? For instance we say that not everyone has knowledge of tending horses, but rather the one skilled with horses, don't we?' Euthyphro agrees, and Socrates goes on: 'For

surely skill with horses is a tendance of horses'. With his example, Socrates is drawing Euthyphro's attention to the class of 'expert', which he further emphasizes by naming two other kinds of 'expert', 'Nor does everyone have knowledge of tending dogs, but rather the huntsman'. 'For surely the huntsman's skill is a tendance of dogs' and 'the herdsman's skill is a tendance of cattle'.[102] Having agreed to all of these points, Euthyphro is the more ready to agree that 'piety and reverence are a tendance of gods', since it implies special expertise is required (such as he himself claims to have). The substance of what he has agreed to now becomes the focus of discussion, since Socrates had prefaced his animal training examples by saying that tendance of the gods is 'surely *not*' like that provided by these experts. For they tend what they tend for the benefit of that which they tend. As he puts it to Euthyphro, 'Doesn't every tendance bring about the same thing? For instance, something like this: Is it for a certain good and benefit of the one tended, just as you see that the horses tended by the skill with horses are benefited and become better? Or don't they seem so to you?' Moreover, *'surely the same goes for the dogs tended by the huntsman's skill, and the cattle by the herdsman's skill, and all the others likewise? Or do you suppose the tendance is for the harm of the one tended?' No doubt having in mind piety as 'tendance', Euthyphro is vehement in his response, 'By Zeus, not I!' But he is equally vehement in denying what would seem the implication about which Socrates next asks—whether he thinks that by doing something pious he is making one of the gods better by his work: 'By Zeus, not I!'*

[102] It is worth noting that the knowledge of 'tending' in each case is a subset of a broader skill.

Given Euthyphro's insistence that this is *not* what he meant, they need to clarify what, then, is in fact meant by 'tendance of the gods'. Before examining their attempt to do so, however, we should consider further what is implied by Socrates' examples and by Euthyphro's responses, perhaps all the more so since Socrates admits that he supposed all along that Euthyphro did *not* mean the kind of tendance men provide to domesticated animals. We may presume, then, that Socrates intended something more by these examples. In light of Socrates' comments, one is reminded that there are experts for each class of things tended, that effective tendance presumes expertise. If divine tendance were in this respect like animal tendance, it would imply that there are experts on the gods. Who these experts of tending the gods might be is not clear. Moreover, insofar as there may be more than one kind of expertise pertinent to horses depending upon what the horse is used for (e.g., war vs. racing vs. plowing) and more than one expertise involved in training dogs (e.g., for hunting, or for guarding, or for herding), we might wonder whether there may be more than one kind of expert on gods, with the possible consequence that there may be more than one kind of piety. What is more important, however, is that animal tending involves expertise. And if god-tending does so likewise, then the experts of tending gods are the only 'pious' ones, and piety is not something to be expected from most people, but only from the few experts (whoever they may be).

Moreover, we should note that all domesticated animals are tended primarily for the benefit of humans who have a use for the animals, and benefit the animal only incidentally. For example, a horse is not made better for its own sake when it

is trained to be a work-horse. Dogs and cattle may be made better in accordance with our needs, but it is not clear that they are made better in accordance with their own. While Socrates suggests that the tendance is for the sake of the benefit of that which is tended, he fails to mention the fact that those things tended are only tended for the ultimate benefit of him who tends. So, even though he disavows the analogy, might Socrates nonetheless be suggesting that it is man who primarily benefits from his tendance of the gods? Moreover, might Socrates actually be suggesting that man 'makes' the gods in accordance with those needs?

We have already noted that men do 'make' the gods in that poets ('makers') provide people with their conceptions of gods through their stories, and other depictions. Recall that Socrates expressed annoyance with the current tales about the gods, suggesting that was why he'd been indicted. The expert's knowledge, then, may consist importantly of knowledge of man's needs, and perhaps, then, Socrates is acting as a philosophic reformer who takes those needs as the standard which properly informs appropriate conceptions of the gods. This would go some distance to explaining why Socrates' continued interest in knowing the 'divine things' necessitates knowledge of piety, or why one must know the pious in order to gain knowledge about the divine things (consider 4e4-5b2; 15e6-16a5).[103]

Acknowledging that he did not think that this was what Euthyphro meant ('far from it'), Socrates claims that this is why he asked Euthyphro what tendance he had in mind. Having revealed that he is at least two steps ahead in the argument, Socrates gives Euthyphro another chance to clarify 'what tendance of gods would

[103] Socrates, as philosophic reformer strives to meet the needs of piety, while providing a salutary account of the gods.

piety be?' Euthyphro clarifies his second definition by responding, 'The one with which slaves tend their masters, Socrates'. 'I understand', says Socrates, 'it would be a certain skillful service to gods, as is likely', to which Euthyphro promptly agrees. Referring to the example of the doctor, Socrates asks Euthyphro what work is produced by the skillful service to the doctor. 'Don't you suppose that it is for producing health?' Euthyphro agrees, and Socrates then asks him what work is produced by the skillful service to shipwrights and the skillful service to housebuilders. After establishing that it is a ship and a house respectively, Socrates poses what is perhaps the most perplexing question of the dialogue, and one that will go unanswered. 'Then tell me, best of men: the skillful service to gods would be a skillful service for producing what work? It is clear that you know, since you assert that you know at least the divine things most nobly of human beings'. But now, instead of answering, Euthyphro insists only that he does know: 'what I say is true, Socrates'. Socrates again asks that Euthyphro tell him, 'before Zeus, what is that altogether noble work which the gods produce, using us as servants?' Again, Euthyphro evades answering, claiming 'Many noble things, Socrates'. Socrates agrees to this, but nonetheless will not be satisfied until Euthyphro tells him their 'main product': 'Yes, and so do the generals [produce many noble things], my dear man. Nevertheless, you could easily tell me their main one, that they produce victory in war.' (13e10-14a2) Socrates goes on, 'The farmers too, I suppose, produce many noble things.[104] Nevertheless their main product is the food from the

[104] This is a somewhat strange comment, as the farmers undoubtedly produce 'useful' things, but it is not clear that their crops should be characterized as 'noble'.

earth.' And so, 'What about the many noble things that the gods produce? What is their main product?'

In his attempt to avoid Socrates' relentless persistence that he (Euthyphro) answer his question, Euthyphro now defers to the most common definition of the pious that he can think of. It is the final amendment to his second formal definition, and is the last attempt he will make at defining the pious. Ironically, given his obvious sense of religious superiority to the common man, his final definition is also the most commonplace view he expresses:

> I also told you a little while ago, Socrates, that to learn precisely how all these things are is a rather lengthy work.[105] However, I tell you simply that if someone has knowledge of how to say and do things gratifying to the gods by praying and sacrificing, these are the pious things. And such things preserve private families as well as the communities of cities. The opposites of the things gratifying are impious, and they overturn and destroy everything (14a10-7).

We shall put off addressing Euthyphro's final definition for a moment in order to consider what Socrates says next: "You could have told me more briefly, Euthyphro, if you wished, the main point of what I was asking. But you are not eager to teach me; that is clear. For you turned away just now, when you were at the very point at which, if you had answered, I would have already learned piety sufficiently from you' (14b8-c4). These are, no doubt, momentous words, and indeed, they are momentously perplexing. Of course, by saying that if Euthyphro would have answered, he would have learned piety sufficiently *from him*, Socrates is not saying he would have learned piety simply. His statement is radically qualified by the addition of 'from you'. Nonetheless, such knowledge is not without

[105] I.e., the last time that he could not answer Socrates' question; 9b4-5

value. We are encouraged, therefore, to make use of the resources within the dialogue itself to conjecture what Socrates may have expected as an adequate answer from Euthyphro: what 'work' gods do that piety assists in.

We must begin by considering the context immediately prior to Euthyphro's reformulation of his definition. The two men sought to uncover what kind of tendance Euthyphro meant by his definition that 'piety is the tendance of the gods'. Claiming that it is 'the one with which slaves tend their masters', Euthyphro was perhaps responding to what he perceived to be obvious irreverence in the conclusion of Socrates' animal training examples of 'tendance'. Because he was not willing to concede that men make gods better through their piety—a notion hard to reconcile with the belief in the superiority of gods to men—he likely felt that by asserting that men tend the gods as slaves tend their masters he was sufficiently observing the kind of awe befitting the disposition of men towards the gods. And this service needn't 'produce' anything beyond the 'gracious living' of those so served: the masters. That the resulting conception of piety is 'slavish' probably did not register with Euthyphro, or matter if it did. Socrates reformulated this as 'skillful service to gods', a definition that tacitly implies that piety is doing what the gods tell us to do (what they *say* as opposed to *do*), and then presented three examples: doctors, shipwrights, and housebuilders, all of whom represent architectonic arts, and all of whom can be said to produce a particular product or outcome.

The first work, health, is generally regarded as the necessary pre-condition for a happy or fruitful life, and, not incidentally, is one of the most common things

that men pray for. The skillful service to the 'expert' on health, the doctor, would consist largely in conveying his expertise to patients about what to eat and how to behave, in addition to administering drugs and assisting in surgeries and so on. Of course, most often the services of the doctor are not sought by a patient unless that patient is already sick and hoping to recover. Sickness can be prevented to some extent, but is also to some extent subject to chance—that is to say, to natural causes not wholly under human control.

The second work, like the third, is a material product: a ship. Skillful service to a shipwright would consist in obeying commands about how to build a safe ship, and perhaps a fast ship, or a particularly strong ship, depending upon its intended use. It has to accommodate certain necessities, and is a refuge from weather and other such conditions of chance. Most significantly, it must bear up under storm conditions and bad weather as it transports people from place to place. Here, too, people pray for 'safe voyage'.

Houses, most significantly, are places of refuge from certain hardships of life, beginning with the natural vicissitudes of weather. They are built to provide physical comfort, but also psychological comfort bound up with privacy. As an indication of their importance as the natural bounded environment of the family, people traditionally prayed that god 'bless this house'[106]. Skillful service to housebuilders would consist in obeying commands about what is needed, what order the structure should be assembled in, and when and where each art should

[106] Houses are also the site of the hearth, the place where each family conducts private sacrifice, according to traditional Greek religion.

come in. The building would be done in light of the purpose of the house, which, again, is bound up with the idea of refuge and comfort.

Taken together, these three examples give us some idea of what Socrates is looking for when he asks, 'Then tell me, best of men: the skillful service to gods would be a skillful service for producing what work?' (13e6-9). But it is not until he prompts Euthyphro with two final examples that the tie that binds all of these examples together comes more clearly to the surface. One question that these examples do raise is whether it is fitting to understand our relationship to gods in terms of 'assisting' them, or whether it is not more fitting to understand our relationship to gods in terms of being benefited by them. That is, do we share more in common with those assisting the doctor, shipwright and housebuilder, or those seeking health (the patient), a ship, or a house for their own purposes?

Socrates' final two examples are that of the general and that of the farmer. And, significantly, Socrates does not ask what service to these two men would consist in, he asks only to name their products.[107] The general produces an outcome or effect, but one that differs significantly from those of the other examples. Victory is neither material, nor does it depend on 'certain' or scientific knowledge about natural processes as does farming. The skill of the general is subject to vicissitudes of weather, as is the skill of the farmer, and his desired outcome—victory—is influenced dramatically by what has long been characterized as 'the fortunes of war'. The farmer, unlike the doctor, does not produce a state of being, nor like the housebuilder and the shipwright, does he produce a material product. Rather, his

[107] Not without significance is that skillful service to the general would consist in 'sacrificing' one's life to his greater cause, obeying his orders without questioning.

art facilitates the natural processes which produce fruits from the earth. But while he can facilitate some natural processes, others—such as rain—are beyond his control. These two examples are the most revealing, precisely because they are the most prayed for. Additionally, they are revealing because they are bound to the idea of justice in that men commonly believe that they 'deserve' rain and victory and all such 'good' things, insofar as they are noble or good or just, but especially in return for their 'piety'. Yet despite the natural human preference that deserving men be rewarded, the reason why both victory and good harvest are most *prayed* for is because they are most susceptible to the forces of chance. Men may make sacrifices and pray for rain, and religious experts may practice augury in order to foretell important matters of war.

All five of the arts listed by Socrates are meant, in some form or another, to cope with what is beyond man's total control. From this we see that Socrates was leading Euthyphro to a particular conclusion based on the common theme that links his examples. From what we have seen thus far in the dialogue, Euthyphro understands the gods to be more powerful willers (i.e., efficient causes) than man. As such, if he is pious, he can win their favor, and hence, their reward. Part of that reward, based on this section of the argument appears to be power in the face of chance. As a pious man, Euthyphro could affect, even manipulate, the will of the pious-loving gods in accordance with his desires. He could, for example, secure health, a safe and happy home, safety at sea, fruits from the earth, or victory in battle. His piety, then, would rise out of his *dread* of poverty, disease, and all such vicissitudes, and would give him *hope* that he could conquer or control fortune.

Here we see the root connection between piety and justice. "If I am pious, I will get what I deserve from the gods, I will get all of the good things and I will be protected from the bad things. What is the main product of the gods? My Good Fortune". Euthyphro does not actually answer Socrates, and so we cannot be sure that the preceding conjectured soliloquy is true. Socrates' examples, however, point to man's desire to eliminate the role of chance in his life. His statement, that he would have learned sufficiently from Euthyphro what piety is had he answered, seems to imply that an honest answer from Euthyphro would reveal that men do not attempt to tend the gods in accordance with what the gods make or with god's 'plan', as an assistant would help a doctor or shipwright or housebuilder. Rather, they seek to tend the gods so that they can secure what they themselves want (preservation, preferably comfortable preservation—of self, family, community).

As noted above, Euthyphro is not eager to reveal to Socrates what he thinks the gods do or make for men. He dodges the question, and chooses instead to qualify his third definition (tendance of the gods) by asserting that 'if someone has knowledge of how to do and say things gratifying to the gods by praying and sacrificing, these are the pious things' (14b2-5). According to this definition, piety is *whatever* gratifies the gods, and this definition clearly demonstrates the radical dependence of piety on beliefs about the gods (i.e., *what* in fact the gods love, and *that* the gods love).[108]

Euthyphro continues: 'And such things preserve private families as well as the communities of cities. The opposites of the things gratifying are irreverent, and

[108] And Socrates could have asked, 'Are they gratifying because they are pious, or pious because they are gratifying?'

they overturn and destroy everything' (14b5-7). This statement is rich in significance. Not only should we note the obvious irony in what Euthyphro has just said—after all he is threatening to destroy his own family, which would imply *impiety* on his part—but we should also note that this definition gives a fairly clear indication of the kind of gods that a city ought to 'make'. The stories about the Olympian gods are directly called into question if piety is properly understood as a means to preserving families and communities of cities. The battles and enmities between fathers and sons, mothers and sons, wives and husbands, and the battles between men supported by factions of gods (e.g., those depicted in Homer's and Hesiod's poetry, 'makings' which Euthyphro invoked to justify his prosecution; 5e-6a) do little to encourage peaceful behavior between communities of men. Given that the stories about the gods play a role in 'making' citizens, particularly those who choose, like Euthyphro, to do as the gods do rather than as the gods say, they are potentially, if not invariably corrupting. Again, consider Socrates as philosophic reformer.

Implicit in this formulation of what piety is, is the sobering notion that the gods willfully destroy families and cities that are 'impious' or incapable of gratifying them, only preserving those that are 'pious' or gratifying to them. This is not far off from Euthyphro's first stated thoughts on piety concerning his prosecution of his father, though that definition was radically individualistic. There we saw that it was his belief that if he did not piously enforce punitive justice, he would share in the pollution of his father, who in his mind had done an injustice in 'killing' his own hired man, and that he (Euthyphro) would thereby be punished.

His prosecution, in his eyes, was pleasing to the gods, and he was pious for his act, thereby securing the favor of the gods. Here, we see that pious actions (prayer and sacrifice) are also pleasing to the gods, and secure favor and prevent destruction (i.e., punishment). The difference between the two examples of piety consists largely in that the first one pertains to what the gods do, and this one to what they say, as actions that please the gods. And perhaps most importantly, according to this formulation of piety, Euthyphro's father-destroying action, contrary to what he believes (that it is most pious), is actually the opposite: it is *impious*, in the main because it is radically individualistic.[109]

Also worthy of consideration is the fact that Socrates would have learned what piety is, not from a correct definition, but from learning what the gods make, or what men get from the gods. In a sense then, learning what piety is (from Euthyphro) is bound up with knowing what men need from the gods, or with what they think the gods, as makers, do (poiein) with or for them. As suggested above, this may go some distance in explaining why Socrates, who has always been interested in the divine things, seeks to learn about piety from Euthyphro. In an important sense, knowledge about piety may be prior to knowledge about the divine things, insofar as man is likely to 'make' gods in accordance with his needs,[110] and

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[109] We should also note that Socrates says that if Euthyphro would have answered his question (what is the noble product of the gods?), 'I would have already learned sufficiently *piety* from you' (14c3-4; my emphasis), not 'the pious'. Socrates goes on to introduce 'piety' as something apparently distinct from 'the pious': 'But as it is—for it is necessary that the lover follow the beloved wherever he leads—again what do you say the pious *and* piety are? (14c5-6; my emphasis) The first occurrence of the word 'piety' was used in the context of the first formulation of Euthyphro's third definition: 'And piety and reverence are a tendance of gods, Euthyphro? Is this what you are saying?' (13b3-4) Socrates only uses 'piety' seven times in the dialogue, and each time he is speaking of it in the context of men's behavior towards the gods.

[110] Do they create a state of soul (as, for example, health), do they create a product, a process, a victory?

therefore misunderstand the gods to the extent that he misunderstands or is unaware of his needs, and of how they may prejudice his understanding of the divine things.

(iii) Sacrifice; gift-giving; commerce; piety is what is dear to the gods: second impasse and Aporia (14c4-15c9)

After asking Euthyphro if the pious and piety are a 'certain kind of knowledge of sacrificing and praying', and securing his agreement to this variation of what he had said moments before, Socrates goes on: 'Isn't sacrificing giving gifts to the gods, while praying is making requests of the gods?'[111] While it does not strike us as altogether strange that Socrates compares sacrificing to giving gifts, neither is it a valid conception of 'sacrifice'. It seems true enough that gifts, like sacrifices, could be intended to please the gods in some way—but, by definition, 'sacrificing' implies that something that someone would otherwise prefer to keep is being 'given' up,[112] and that that something is given up for the sake of something else regarded as more important. Sacrifice typically bespeaks devotion and loss. And while we may concede that one has to part with one's money in order to buy a gift, or time in order to make one, this is not what we mean when we speak of

[111] Before taking up Euthyphro's new amendment to his definition that piety is a tendance of gods (doing things gratifying to the gods by praying and sacrificing), Socrates makes a strange comment: that 'it is necessary that the lover follow the beloved wherever he leads' (14c4-5). Any suggestion that the two men share an erotic relationship is perplexing, to say the least. It may among other things, however, be intended to alert us to the fact that, contrary to what Socrates suggested earlier, that which is led is not simply led because it is led. Rather, the led—here the lover—must be capable of being led. And when we speak of a lover being led, as opposed to a horse being led, we must give an account of *what*, in fact, is doing the 'leading' (i.e., something within the lover). Moreover, it may be pointing to a distinction between *eros* and *philia* (as possible forms of love between men and gods), and to the hoped-for reciprocal nature of love. All of these considerations Socrates left unaddressed in the section dealing with the love of the gods.

[112] As for example, we might 'sacrifice' sleep for the sake of taking a sick friend to the hospital, as a poor mother might 'sacrifice' her own rations for the sake of her children, or as a soldier might 'sacrifice' his life for his cause (i.e., his country).

sacrifice. A bouquet of flowers is not a sacrifice; Iphigenia and Isaac are. Moreover, it is not altogether accurate to say that prayer is simply knowledge of making requests. Men may call upon the gods to bring rain, or to help them out of particular problems, or to 'give them strength' to endure certain problems, but they also pray to give thanks, as, for example, one expresses gratitude for a meal.

Upon Euthyphro's agreement (that sacrificing is gift-giving and prayer is proper requesting), 'Very much so', Socrates continues: 'Then piety would be a knowledge of requesting from and giving to gods, from this argument' (14c8-10). Euthyphro responds: 'You have comprehended what I said, Socrates, quite nobly', to which Socrates replies, ironically, 'Yes, for I am desirous, my dear man, of your wisdom and I am applying my mind to it, so that whatever you say won't fall to the ground in vain. But tell me, what is this service to the gods? Do you say that it requests from and gives to them?' Euthyphro agrees. Socrates then asks him, ignoring momentarily the first part of Euthyphro's formulation of piety (sacrificing to gods), if he thinks that 'correct requesting' is 'to request the things we need from [the gods]?' 'Certainly', Euthyphro responds. Previously, Socrates had asked Euthyphro about the main noble product of the gods, and Euthyphro had declined answering. At that point, the distinction between what man *wants* versus what man truly *needs* was unaddressed, as it is here. In this context, the distinction is between knowledge of requesting as knowing what to pray for (i.e., man's true needs), or as knowing how to pray effectively for what one *wants*. Having agreed that the former is indeed what we mean by 'correct requesting', that man requests what he needs

rather than what he wants, Euthyphro has unknowingly agreed to rather strict terms that will influence the remainder of the argument.

Socrates balances out the first part of the definition (proper sacrifice) in accordance with the same idea, that man must then give what is needed in return[113]: 'And again, is correct giving to give them as gifts in return the things they happen to need from us? For surely it wouldn't be artful for a giver to bring someone gifts of which he has no need'. Here too, we must treat as a real question what Socrates is suggesting. Having dropped the idea of sacrificing, which, as we have noted is not synonymous with gift-giving simply, and taken up gift-giving on its own, Socrates is now suggesting that gifts are given with the intention of meeting the needs of the receiver.

It is enough to recall the relationship that Socrates has just pointed to—that of lover and beloved—to show that this is not altogether true. One does not give gifts that are *needed* so much as one gives gifts that are *pleasing,* and, quite often, things *not* needed, but (rather) 'luxuries'. We often think of giving gifts in terms of 'treating' someone to what they would not buy for themselves. Part of the reason for this is that a gift is an expression of one's love or friendship, and is meant to demonstrate that the giver is either delighted by or grateful to the recipient. And while there may be some connection between gift-giving and sacrifice, as for example, men sacrifice in order to express gratitude, there are other elements to sacrifice that refute the notion that it is primarily 'giving gifts'. Consider, for example, a Christian who 'sacrifices' certain pleasures at Lent, a priest who

[113] Another way of balancing the definition would be to assert that men pray in order to get what they *want*, and sacrifice to the gods in order to give them what they want, or what is *pleasing* to them—not what they need.

sacrifices the family life and attending pleasures, Abraham and Agamemnon who were willing to sacrifice Isaac and Iphigenia. Not only do these examples call into question the notion that sacrifice is 'giving gifts' but also that 'giving gifts' is giving what is needed. It would be difficult to make the case that the Christian god 'needs' men to sacrifice pleasures, or that the Olympian gods 'need' animals to be sacrificed (Do they need Euthyphro to 'sacrifice' his father?). That which is sacrificed is better understood as pleasing to the gods, as a symbol of servitude and reverence, out of gratitude and acknowledgment. Of course, Socrates is about to call seriously into question the idea of sacrifice simply. Indeed, the idea of 'sacrificing' one's own good for the sake of something else is somewhat controversial. Can a man truly give up all concern for his own good, or does he give up one perceived good in exchange for another perceived good?

Responding to Socrates' leading question with, 'What you say is true, Socrates', Euthyphro sets himself up for Socrates' subsequent—and indeed somewhat vulgar—comment. Socrates' question itself prejudiced the answer that he has provided, though this by no means indicates that Euthyphro's response is insincere. In fact, although it may be true that some men sacrifice in order to express gratitude, it is also true that men are inclined to attempt to bargain with God, asserting for example, that 'they will never cheat again if they are not caught this time', etc. They 'sacrifice' certain behaviors, habits, pleasures, in exchange for other coveted goods or outcomes (even so, their sacrifices do not obviously meet

the 'needs' of the gods). Indeed, the Olympian gods in particular, seem to invite, if not demand this kind of bribery, as the tales of the poets suggest.[114]

Socrates' leading question (surely men do not give gifts that aren't needed?) indicates that he wants this conversation to go in a certain direction. He eliminates any claims to altruistic sacrifice to gods (gifts of gratitude without any expectation of returned favor) by having Euthyphro agree that it is not artful to give gifts that are not needed, and he focuses the conversation on need rather than 'what is pleasing'. Socrates follows this leading question with a 'vulgar' comparison of piety to a kind of business transaction, 'Then piety, Euthyphro, would be a certain art of commerce for gods and human beings with each other'. Nonplussed, Euthyphro responds, 'Yes, commerce, if it's more pleasing to you to give it this name'. Socrates has at this point exposed the less than noble root of much religious sacrifice. According to this interpretation, all sacrifice is illusory in that, contrary to what some may think, the 'sacrificer' gives something of his own good up for the sake of *some other aspect of his good*, as for example one 'sacrifices' pleasures for the sake of god's favor. One does not altruistically sacrifice one's own good without getting something in return. According to this argument, there is no possible way that Euthyphro can continue to think of his prosecution of his father as a 'noble sacrifice', which sheds light on Socrates' chosen arguments. Euthyphro's seeming indifference to this suggestion mirrors that which he displayed when Socrates asked him to proceed according to his method of considering the *idea* of

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[114] Consider, for example, the story of Menelaus, which Socrates' subsequent reference to Proteus suggests. When stranded by contrary winds on an island near Egypt after the Trojan War, Menelaus succeeds in capturing Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea whose wisdom he needs in order to escape the island and return home. Proteus informs Menelaus that he has neglected to sacrifice properly to the gods, and that he must do so if he hopes to escape (Odyssey, IV. 351-569).

the pious ('If this is the way you wish, Socrates, I'll tell you in this way too'; 6e7-8), and may strike us as strange. One might expect Euthyphro to be agitated by the fact that this undermines his prosecution, or we might expect a religious man to be, at the very least, insulted by the vulgarity of this suggestion (though this may be only an indication that the Greek attitude towards the gods is different in character than that of a Christian[115]). But he does not flinch. Indeed, the Olympian gods, as portrayed by the poets, seem to demand such transactions. Socrates goes on,

> 'But it's not at all more pleasing unless it happens to be true.[116] Tell me, what benefit for the gods does there happen to be from the gifts that they get from us? As to what they give, it is clear to everyone, for there is no good for us that they do not give. But as to what they get from us, how are they benefited? Or do we have so much of an advantage over them in our commerce, that we get all the good things from them, while they get nothing from us?'

Socrates is not specific as to what these truly good things for us actually are. Also worthy of note is that while Socrates has said that the gods provide all good things for man, he remains silent as to whether or not they also give bad things (and if *they* do not, what does?).[117] This is important because Euthyphro appears to be quite confident that the gods do in fact do bad things to humans, such as destroy cities and punish the polluted. Of course, it is not clear that punishment is necessarily bad (that is, rightly administered it could lead to improvement), but the outright destruction of cities would appear to be so (for surely the children, at least, are

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[115] While Euthyphro does not become indignant at this rather coarse suggestion, certain Christian commentators certainly do (Friedlander, *Plato*, p.89; Gigon, *Platons Euthyphron*, p.35).

[116] This is a most significant comment, one that distinguishes Socrates from most men. If man's conception of the divine things is bound up with psychological comfort (e.g., his conception of the gods helps him to deal with chance and misfortune), Socrates stands apart in that what is pleasing (e.g., the idea that man can control fortune through the gods) is not acceptable to him unless it happens to be true. Most men, on the other hand, will lead lives believing in what is comforting, without ever asking if it happens also to be true. This comment may give us some indication of why Socrates says that it would be cowardly not to 'begin' again in their attempts to know the pious at the end of the dialogue. That comment would seem to indicate that it takes some kind of courage to face the truth about the divine things.

[117] Consider *Republic*, 379b-c

'innocent'). We should also note that, on this view, the gods must deserve ultimate credit for any politicians who care first for the young, earlier claimed by Socrates to be 'cause of the most and greatest good things for the city' (3a3-4). We are therefore invited to speculate how this is so. Are we to presume that such 'politician/statesmen' would be divinely gifted? And, if as suggested earlier, Socrates is the one who proves himself to be concerned first and foremost with the young, what are we to make of him?

Also worthy of note is that Socrates appears again to be prejudicing Euthyphro's response. The word used for 'to have an advantage over' (or 'to get the better of'; '*pleonektein*'), is the same word used in *Republic* by Thrasymachus in his defense of *injustice* (344a). As such, it has negative connotations, suggesting, in the present context, that men act unjustly in their 'commerce' with the gods. Euthyphro is understandably loathe to agree to this, but also cannot agree that men benefit the obviously superior gods. He is caught. His response reveals that he does not take seriously the possibility that men 'get the better' of the gods, but also that he is aghast at the very idea of inferior men bettering the obviously superior gods: 'But do you suppose, Socrates, that the gods are benefited from the things they get from us?' (15a6-7) This is Euthyphro's *first* and *only* question in the dialogue, and appears to be simply rhetorical. It may also be an indication that whatever respect Euthyphro felt for Socrates at the beginning of the conversation (due to their 'kinship' in Euthyphro's eyes) is fading quickly (perhaps they are not so alike). Socrates' turn from the heavenly things to the transitory, practical things—like

commerce—does not sit well with the 'high-minded' Euthyphro, and yet he is helpless (one might say 'out of his league') to prevent it.

Socrates, in ironic, that is to say apparent, innocence, answers Euthyphro with another question, 'Well, Euthyphro, what ever would these gifts from us to the gods be?' To this Euthyphro responds, 'What else do you suppose but honor and respect, and, as I was just saying, gratitude?' No doubt this is what Euthyphro originally intended with his definition, (prayer and sacrifice and those things that gratify the gods), having in mind that what man gives to gods is gratitude (14b27). Socrates, however, avoided this interpretation of the definition, seemingly unwilling to allow Euthyphro to put a high-minded interpretation on his view of piety. Socrates did this in order to confront Euthyphro with what lay at the heart of his understanding of the relationship between men and gods: a kind of commercial exchange. And this view was intimately bound up with Euthyphro's notion of piety (his 'sacrifice' of his father being representative of his side of the 'exchange'), despite his being unaware of it, and despite the fact that Euthyphro earlier rejected the notion that men benefit gods by 'tending' them (as per Socrates' animal training examples). Socrates also shows Euthyphro that, based on his own understanding of the gods as radically superior to men, it does not make sense to think of man in terms of making the gods better. But, neither does it make sense to think of man as being the only recipient of things beneficial in the relationship. It is in this way that Euthyphro is forced to drop 'the beneficial' from the relationship, only to replace it with 'what is dear'. Socrates asks (again prejudicing Euthyphro's response by smuggling in the 'dear to the gods' as an alternative to the uncertain 'beneficial'),

'Is the pious then gratifying, Euthyphro, but not beneficial or dear to the gods?' Euthyphro replies, 'I for one suppose it is of all things most dear'. If he cannot be certain that man *benefits* the gods through his piety, then surely man must at least *please* the gods through his piety.

Socrates leads Euthyphro up to this point, forcing him into a position where he must again declare the pious to be what is dear to the gods. And yet, that the pleasing is what is dear to the gods cannot be accepted according to what Socrates has taken pains to establish: that only what 'benefits' the gods can be dear. Anything else is tantamount to an injustice. That gifts are not primarily intended to benefit, and that gift-giving is not synonymous with sacrifice are all points that Socrates finesses in order to arrive here, at another impasse. All of these concerns which call into question what Socrates has declared about 'benefiting' the gods, however, pass Euthyphro by. And it is in this way that Socrates refutes Euthyphro's definition, though his refutation is by no means definitive.

It does not occur to Euthyphro to consider that man's piety and gratitude may in fact, only benefit him. We can easily surmise his train of thought: 'doesn't piety imply a mutual relationship between men and gods, and wouldn't such a relationship, particularly one that involves requesting and bestowing what is needed, presuppose a mutual exchange? And if the gods cannot be made better by obviously inferior men, then what is left for the gods to gain from the relationship aside from its pleasing character?'[118] Of course, there is another alternative, one

[118] Unless, perhaps, man's relation to the gods is more akin to *eros* than to *philia* (that is, an unfulfilled longing versus a friendship). But that might mean that the gods are indifferent to men, and would thereby seriously call into question the notion of piety altogether.

mentioned neither by Socrates nor by Euthyphro, and one that has special pertinence for this dialogue. If we consider the gods to be inclined towards men as parents are to their children, we can imagine them as the source of all good things apart from any conception of mutually benefiting exchange. Parents may love their children, and be pleased with their gratitude and gifts, while nonetheless benefiting them without expectation of 'equal' repayment.

Socrates next draws the conclusion to the argument, 'Then this again, as is likely, is the pious: what is dear to the gods', to which Euthyphro agrees. It seems they have returned full circle to Euthyphro's first formal definition. Socrates says:

> So in saying this, will you wonder if it is apparent that your arguments don't stay still but walk about? And will you accuse me of being the Daedalus who is responsible for making them walk about, when you yourself, being much more artful than Daedalus, even make them go around in a circle? Or don't you perceive that our argument has gone around and come back to the same place? For surely you remember that it became apparent to us that the pious and the god-loved are not the same but different from each other. Or don't you remember?

Euthyphro claims that he does remember, whereupon Socrates asks him, 'So aren't you aware now that you are asserting that what is dear to the gods is pious? Does this turn out to be anything else but god-loved, or not?' Euthyphro again agrees, and Socrates concludes that 'Therefore either we weren't agreeing nobly before, or, if we did agree nobly then, we aren't setting it down correctly now'.

This is the second mention of Daedalus in the dialogue, and is extremely important for an understanding of both the structure and the argument of the dialogue. The first mention of this ancient, mythical craftsman occurred at the first impasse in the dialogue, after Euthyphro's definition of 'the pious' had been apparently debunked by Socrates. That definition (what is dear to the gods), although seemingly different in kind from his first attempt at a definition ('I say, then, the pious is just what I am doing now: to proceed against whoever does

injustice regarding murders or thefts of sacred things…whether he happens to be a father or mother or anyone else at all; and to not proceed against him is impious'; 5d8-e2) was actually related to the claim that one must enforce punitive justice. For it is what underlay Euthyphro's more particular example of a pious or impious thing; that is, the supposition behind Euthyphro's claim that enforcing punitive justice is pious is that punitive justice is 'dear to the gods'. At that point, he was looking to the examples of what the gods do in order to determine what, in fact, the gods love. At this point in the dialogue—having reached the second mention of Daedalus, again in the context of an impasse—again, his name follows the same definition that it did the first time, 'what is dear to the gods is pious'. For the second time, this same definition underlies Euthyphro's definition of the 'pious things' or 'piety' (sacrificing and praying). After the first impasse, Euthyphro posited (with the help of Socrates) another definition: piety is tendance of the gods. Reformulating this definition three times as 'skillful service to the gods' (13d5-6), as 'knowledge of requesting from and giving gifts to gods' (14d1-2), and finally as 'the art of commerce for gods and human beings with each other' (14e5-6), the two men return to Euthyphro's first formally adequate definition: what is dear to the gods. This definition underlies all of the examples provided by Euthyphro in that he assumed that his examples of pious behavior are pleasing, or gratifying to the gods. And as such, that they are 'dear to the gods'. The main difference between these definitions and the one that proceeded the first impasse, the first attempt to define 'the pious' as what is dear to the gods, and the first mention of Daedalus (that enforcing punitive justice is pious), is that they pertain to what the gods *say,* not to

what the gods *do*. It seems, therefore, that any attempt to prescribe pious behavior to men in accordance with a definition of 'the pious', and in relation to the gods, results in this same ambiguous claim: that 'the pious' is what is dear to the gods. It appears, then, that 'the pious' is *inherently* circular, because it is inseparable from what pleases the gods, and as such, from what is dear to the gods. While this may be one of, if not the main philosophical point of the dialogue, the circularity of the argument may also be for the practical purpose of showing Euthyphro that he is, in fact, confused in his religious beliefs.

Having said this, we should nonetheless note that there appears to be a difference between 'what is dear to the gods' and what is 'god-loved', although Socrates, in both sections of the argument that address this definition, blurs the distinction. If the pious is 'god-loved' as explained by Socrates earlier in the dialogue, then it may be loved for no discernible reason, and, accordingly, man can have no recourse to the pious outside of his communication with gods. If, on the other hand, the pious is dear to the gods because it is inherently loveable, then the standard of the pious is not located within the will of the gods, and, perhaps then, *knowledge* of the pious is accessible to man, hard though it may be to discover. More importantly, 'the pious' would be *what* the gods love, meaning that, if man sought knowledge about the things that the gods love (e.g., justice, the noble, the good), he could act in accordance with his knowledge (seeing them himself as inherently loveable). And because he would then be attempting to *be* just or noble or good, he would *ipso facto* be pious, albeit, perhaps, only incidentally. In sum, Socrates' apparent refutation of Euthyphro's definition (what is dear to the gods is

pious) remains questionable because he (questionably) conflates 'what is dear to the gods' with 'god-loved'.

So, we have seen that Euthyphro's definitions begin with a more 'sophisticated' understanding of what the gods love (based on what they do), and move to a more 'common' or traditional conception (adherence to what they say). In the final reformulations of Euthyphro's subsequent definition of piety (that piety is that part of justice having to do with tendance of the gods), what was preserved in that example—that piety is under the purview of justice, and hence morally and legally significant—is dropped from the conversation altogether. Piety becomes a kind of commerce with the gods. It would seem, therefore, that if Socrates' intention was to eliminate Euthyphro's belief that enforcing punitive justice is somehow pious, then this definition would be safe and indeed salutary to leave Euthyphro with. And in particular, since Euthyphro has revised his definition of piety so that what 'preserves private families as well as communities of cities' is pious, and what does the opposite of these things is impious, Socrates has cleverly if subtly insinuated that, according to this standard, Euthyphro's prosecution of his father is both impious, and because piety is a subset of justice, unjust. This alone would, perhaps, be enough to shake Euthyphro's confidence in his prosecution. But we see that it is Socrates that leads Euthyphro back to his earlier definition of what is dear to the gods is pious, and therefore to another impasse. It is Socrates who conflates 'what is dear to the gods' with what is 'god-loved', thereby apparently debunking this definition as he seemingly did the first.[c] But because Socrates' refutation is questionable at best, we must ask: Why does Socrates undermine this

salutary definition of piety? In order to see this, we must consider Euthyphro as a type, in addition to considering the connection between his two versions of 'authority' regarding the pious (what the gods *say* versus what the gods *do*).

At the beginning of the dialogue we encountered Euthyphro as an arrogant, self-professed expert on how the divinities are disposed towards the pious and the impious things. He showed obvious disdain for the many, an ignorance about human things, and identified with Socrates because they both are concerned with loftier matters, are both 'different' from the many, and because they both (in his mind) share a connection with the gods (3b5-6). In a sense, he can be seen as a parody of Socrates himself.

However, he also shares certain characteristics with Meletus, Socrates' accuser in his trial and a stand-in for the city itself (as he identifies himself with the city both in his accusation and in the kind of prosecution he brings forth: an indictment). For example, both Meletus and Euthyphro are younger men accusing older men; they both are said by Socrates to be wise beyond their years; and they both could be said to be attacking the hearth (as Euthyphro expressly claims about Meletus; 3a6-9; c.f. 4b6-c1).[119]

Euthyphro, then, would seem to be some kind of being who is like the many of the city (he shares their beliefs in the traditional poetic accounts of the gods), and yet, like Socrates, strays from strict conventionalism. Though he is not a being in 'between' Socrates and the city in the sense that he is superior to the many (he in

[119] As noted earlier, the hearth was important as the religious center of the home. It was the site of sacrifice (by the father most often). While it is somewhat obvious as to why Euthyphro could be said to be attacking the hearth, it is less clear why Meletus' prosecution of Socrates would be seen as an attack on the hearth. Of course, this accusation of Meletus is made by Euthyphro, and so the significance may be limited.

fact seems to be much 'lower' than the common decent men), or in that he is potentially 'philosophic', he seems to be more 'sophisticated' than the many because of his interest in 'higher' things. But, despite his strivings, he has taken the wrong road by taking the common notions of piety to their extreme (and because the traditional accounts of the gods are questionable (6a7-b3), his extreme commitment to them is actually dangerous in addition to being completely un-philosophic). He sees himself as raised above the latter's 'petty' concerns because of his interest in the (loftier) divine things, and because of his belief in the superiority of his 'wisdom'; and, he is sympathetic to Socrates' heterodoxy and does not condemn him for his curious ways. He differs from Socrates, however, in that either he is unwilling to teach his wisdom (as Socrates suggests), or in that no one wants to listen to his wisdom (as Euthyphro himself suggests; 3d5-6; 3c1-4—and seems the more likely). But, he also differs from the many in that he is concerned not with what the gods say is pious, but rather with what they do, as examples of the pious. He models his conception of pious behavior on the gods' behavior (as depicted in the poets' accounts), rather than on what they (supposedly) prescribe for men.

As we have seen, what the gods' desire seems to underlie, necessarily, both Euthyphro's original conception of piety and his final, more common-place conception. Because Euthyphro appears to be a confused compromise between Socrates and the many (being more 'sophisticated'; but also being more despicable)—modeling himself on conventional views of the gods and yet striving to distinguish himself from those who share these conventional views—there are in

principle two ways that Euthyphro could be made less dangerous, and two ways that he could be improved. Either move ahead, to becoming like Socrates and embracing philosophy, or move back, to a complete acceptance of the decent, common notions of piety, such as do not threaten the community (as his own idiosyncratic view does). It seems impossible for Euthyphro to move ahead, being utterly 'committed' and un-philosophic. Moving forward to philosophy would seem to require an initial rejection of the 'wisdom' he claims to have.

But, can he really move back either? Can a man go from a more sophisticated understanding to a less sophisticated understanding? Moreover, since the common thread that underlies both the sophisticated view of piety and the more commonplace view is there to be seen, would a going back necessarily prevent a going forward again? (i.e., the definitions are circular (15b5-c3) not linear, and therefore he could easily circle back to his original view) It may in fact be necessary that Socrates undermine both the more advanced and the commonplace view of piety in order to truly undermine Euthyphro's prosecution of his father. It seems, then, that Plato may be alerting us to the fact that, although we want to dismiss Euthyphro for his extremism, his understanding is, in fact, related to the more common understanding of piety; in fact, the two may share the same root. Indeed, this was made clear in Socrates' comparison of piety to a commercial exchange; what would seem to be a salutary notion of piety—if somewhat vulgar—would not have been a safe position to leave Euthyphro with. On that model, he could have justified his prosecution of his father in terms of an exchange. And if not even Euthyphro would descend to such a level, the fact remains that his prosecution is

based on this understanding of piety, and so would have continued to be a possible threat had Socrates not undermined even that more common notion of piety. In a sense, then, Euthyphro's 'fanaticism' may simply be a version of a more commonplace understanding of piety taken to its extreme, representing a view that neither benefits the city, nor like philosophy, truly benefits him.[120]

As a strange mixture[121] of both Socrates' characteristics and those of the many, he shows himself, as a type, to be a 'dead end'. That is, he cannot go back to a more common understanding of piety, but without accepting philosophy (which he proves incapable of doing), neither can he go forward. The beliefs that separate Euthyphro from the many (beliefs he sees as 'privileged' knowledge of divine things), are 'proven' by Socrates to be inadequate, and yet he shows himself to be both incapable of and disinterested in replacing such 'knowledge' with philosophy.[122] It may, therefore, be necessary in this particular case, to undermine the more common understanding of piety along with the more sophisticated one.

(iv) Socrates' attempt to begin again; Euthyphro leaves (15c9-16a5)

After securing Euthyphro's agreement that either the two men 'weren't agreeing nobly before, or if [they] did agree nobly then, [they] aren't setting it down nobly now',[123] Socrates states that they 'must consider again from the beginning what the pious is, since I [Socrates] will not voluntarily give up out of cowardice

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[120] A discussion of whether and how philosophy benefits him who practices it is beyond the scope of this paper.
[121] We might also consider the three positions in the dialogue, as represented by the many, by Euthyphro, and by Socrates as: do what the gods say, do what the gods do, and know what the gods know.
[122] Strauss, "On the Euthyphron" in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, 196-7.
[123] Again, we should be aware of the fact that the nobility or beauty of a speech does not necessarily bespeak its veracity.

until I learn it'. Socrates' introduction of 'cowardice' recalls the earlier part of the discussion between the two men concerning the relationship between dread and awe, and seems to suggest that there is a kind of profound fear or dread that attends—not just man's position towards the gods themselves—but the very *idea* of any inquiry about them. That is, Socrates seems to be suggesting that men typically do not expressly consider, much less reconsider, their understanding of piety because they fear doing so.[124] Socrates' statement would thereby seem to imply that, if this dread of inquiring into the idea of piety is somehow related to awe or shame, in his case, at least, he is able to overcome it all in order to pursue the truth about these matters.[125] What this dread or fear consists of he does not specify. But from what we have seen thus far in the dialogue, we may conjecture that because Euthyphro's (and perhaps most men's) conception of piety is intimately connected to an understanding of the cosmos which sees the gods as the controllers of what we call 'chance' (or 'fortune', 'luck', 'fate' even), the question of piety would mean facing the idea of chance, and the possibility that *nothing* 'controls' it. That is, one may come to understand piety, and the conception of the gods that supports it, as simply a means of coming to terms with what is (otherwise) beyond man's control. It is this realization—that there are things not only beyond man's control, but perhaps beyond even the control of a god (whom one can piously revere, and thus

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[124] Socrates' statement invites the consideration that unexamined piety may in fact prevent the development of courage and wisdom. Of course, piety can certainly be used to buttress courage, as *Republic* would seem to attest to. This may, however, simply be a starting point to inquire into whether or not there may be something called 'political' courage, and something distinct: philosophic courage. This may go some distance to explaining why piety is not spoken of as a virtue.
[125] Though he may be ashamed to reveal the conclusions borne out of his inquiries, consider *Apology*, 22b.

pray to intervene on one's behalf)—that Socrates implies is a source of fear that hinders philosophic investigation into divine and sacred matters.

Socrates continues, 'Do not dishonor me, but apply your mind in every way as much as possible and tell me the truth now. For if in fact any human being knows, you do, and like Proteus, you must not be let go until you tell'. Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea, was famous both for his wisdom and for his attempts to abscond when captured by men seeking that wisdom. In the process of trying to evade their questions, he would assume the forms of numerous beasts and objects, but if held long enough would comply with the captor's demands. Socrates' comparison of Euthyphro to Proteus implies that Euthyphro is reticent to share his wisdom, and so is evading answering by 'changing shapes'. Of course, we might more reasonably suggest that—Socrates' interrogation having shown that Euthyphro has no such wisdom—he is simply shifting and changing the 'shapes' of his views according to the 'pressure' of the argument.

Socrates' comparison is at the same time an invitation to compare Socrates himself to Menelaus. Upon doing so, we see certain similarities, but also several significant differences. Menelaus, who was stormbound on an island near Egypt after the battle at Troy, captured Proteus in order to learn how he might escape. When recounting his story to Telemachos, the son of Odysseus, Menelaus begins,

> The gods held me still in Egypt when I was eager to come back
> here, for I had not rendered complete hecatombs to them.
> The gods have always desired that their orders should be listened to.[126]

[126] *Odyssey*, 351-3. Note that Menelaus did not lament the 'chance' occurrence of contrary winds, nor did he ask for a solution to combating the winds. He assumed the gods were responsible.

In tacitly comparing himself to Menelaus, Socrates is suggesting that just as Menelaus questioned Proteus in order to get out of his predicament, he is questioning Euthyphro in order to get out of one also: his prosecution at the hands of Meletus. This comparison is not unfounded, as Socrates suggested from the beginning that becoming Euthyphro's student would allow him to prove to Meletus that he had learned sufficiently the things pious and the things not (5a3-9;12e1-5; 15e6-16a), and the divine things (5a3-9; 16a1-4).

And yet, there would seem to be a great difference between Socrates and Menelaus. Upon successfully capturing the Old Man of the Sea, Menelaus asks him, 'which one of the immortals hampers me here and keeps me from my journey' (468-9). But while Socrates' crime is formulated as one of irreverence, he does not make the seemingly obvious connection that Menelaus does: that he has offended one of the gods and must therefore discover how to appease him or her in order to escape his predicament. Instead, he professes a wish to appease Meletus by showing him that, if he had done anything wrong, it was out of ignorance, but that he has since learned better.[127] Socrates does not ask Euthyphro, as did Menelaus, which specific 'pious' sacrifice he should make to which specific god. Rather, he asks Euthyphro what 'the pious' *is*, but then proceeds to undermine the very notion that saved Menelaus from his predicament: correct sacrifice and prayer.

In light of these differences, we ought to reconsider Socrates' true purpose for 'capturing' Euthyphro. Presuming that learning what 'the pious things' are from

[127] Consider in this regard, however, what Socrates says at 8b10-e2, that no one who has done injustice dares to dispute that he ought not pay the penalty. This appears to be precisely what Socrates is doing in saying that because he has since learned better, he ought not to be punished, or, if anyone should be, it should be his teacher.

Euthyphro is not likely to free Socrates from his prosecution, and in particular, not likely to appease Meletus nor even persuade a majority of the jurors, then we must seek another reason for Socrates' undertaking this conversation. And we are given some indication of what that purpose might be in the sentences that follow Socrates' comparison of Euthyphro to Proteus. He says:

> For if you didn't know plainly the pious and the impious, there is no way that you ever would have attempted to prosecute an elderly man, your father, for murder on behalf of a hired man. Rather, as to the gods you would have dreaded the risk that you would not do it correctly, and as to human beings, you would have been ashamed.

There are sufficient grounds for concluding that Socrates' real purpose for engaging in this conversation is that of shaking Euthyphro's confidence about his prosecution of his father. Having said this, however, we see immediately why this could never have been his stated intention, for Euthyphro would never have agreed to become—in effect—Socrates' student (rather than his supposed teacher). Euthyphro makes it clear that many people have already attempted to dissuade him from his actions with little or no effect (4d7-e3). So, Socrates had to convince Euthyphro of another motive for this conversation, and that which most readily and convincingly presented itself was Socrates' stated intention: that of escaping Meletus' charge.

While it is just possible that Socrates was intrigued by Euthyphro's claim to wisdom, and desired to test that wisdom for his own purposes—especially since that claim was made in the context of Euthyphro's disclosing the details of his very unorthodox prosecution—it is also possible that Socrates' case has nothing whatsoever to do with his wish to examine Euthyphro. Since Socrates' interest in Euthyphro arises only *after* he was informed of Euthyphro's bizarre intention to prosecute his own father, it may be an indication that all along, his true inten[illegible]

was to reform the strange and dangerous Euthyphro. And in stating that Euthyphro's prosecution of his father is an indication of Euthyphro's being 'far advanced in wisdom' (4a8-b2), Socrates makes the correctness of Euthyphro's actions dependent upon his wisdom. We see, then, that if Socrates can succeed in casting Euthyphro's knowledge about 'the pious things' in an uncertain light, his prosecution of his father (which is made in the name of piety) will, by extension, be called into question. And this is, in fact, what happens.

Thus, after Socrates once again draws the connection between Euthyphro's knowledge of the pious and his prosecution of his father, with the clear implication that if he cannot teach Socrates what the pious is, then he can make no claim to correct behavior with regard to his prosecution—Socrates solicits Euthyphro to begin again: 'But as it is now, I know well that you suppose that you know plainly the pious and the not pious. So tell me, Euthyphro, best of men, and don't hide what you hold it to be'. Euthyphro's response would seem to suggest that his confidence has indeed been shaken: 'Some other time, then, Socrates. For now I am in a hurry to go somewhere, and it is time for me to go away'. Still, we have no way of knowing how he has been affected by this conversation. The dialogue does not make clear whether Euthyphro was coming to the courthouse in order to put forth his prosecution, meeting Socrates *before* doing so, or whether he had just come from putting forth his lawsuit. And so we have no indication of whether Euthyphro's prosecution was abandoned or pursued at a later date. As a result, we have no clear evidence of the effectiveness of Socrates' attempt at dissuading Euthyphro.

In the background, then, looms the question of how properly to deal with a man like Euthyphro. If Socrates has successfully dissuaded him from his prosecution (which we should remember is destructive of the family), then Socrates' assertion that he himself would not prosecute anyone remains sensible, since his alternative way of dealing with perceived injustices, that of privately teaching and correcting the wrong-doer, is sound (5a3-b8). However, if Euthyphro continued with his prosecution, then we must consider what course of action *would* prevent Euthyphro from doing something so detrimental to wholesome political life. We must consider the limitations on the private method endorsed and exemplified by Socrates given its ineffectiveness with certain men. How can a city ensure that the religiosity of its citizens remains under the purview of the larger domain of justice, and that it does not turn against the foundations of the city itself? If religious 'fanaticism', and in particular fanaticism leagued with political means of punitive justice, cannot be 'over-ruled' by philosophy, nor confined by more moderate and salutary views about piety, then is there any choice but to undermine conventional piety too? That is, in order to undermine Euthyphro's certainty, was it necessary for Socrates to also cast commonplace piety in an uncertain light?

In regard to this question, we ought to consider that Socrates—while attempting to show Euthyphro that if he cannot define 'the pious', then he cannot be sure that his 'doings' (*poiesois*) are correct (*orthos*)[128]—said to Euthyphro that he ought to dread the gods[129] and feel shame before his fellow humans. He seems to

[128] This exact phrase could be leveled against Socrates' unorthodox 'makings' (also poiein), against his innovations concerning the gods. Socrates says nearly the same thing at the outset of the conversation, 4e4-9.
[129] He says the same thing at 4e7-9.

thereby suggest that dread for the gods can be experienced apart from awe, contrary to what he said before (that where there is awe, there is also dread). Because Socrates mentions shame in regard to humans, we are invited to consider that shame may have, in fact, been the unnamed 'even' in his earlier taxonomy (12c3-9). However, in referring to shame, Socrates says nothing of dread, and thereby calls into question whether shame, and perhaps even awe, can be felt apart from dread. If this is the case, then our previous consideration—that both dread and awe would seem to *overlap*, but that neither includes the entirety of the other's domain within its own as a subset—would appear to be correct. This is important if the relationship between awe and dread is analogous to that respecting piety and justice. If the former two overlap but also enjoy some degree of exclusivity, then such might also be the case with piety and justice. Socrates' numerical taxonomy, then, would not represent the *necessary* model for understanding the relationship between piety and justice. That is, the whole of piety would not necessarily have to be included within the domain of justice (as 'odd' is within 'number'); indeed, piety does not necessarily have to be a legal concern of the city at all; as, for example, the modern liberal democracy does not marry church and state. It may be that Euthyphro as a character is a starting point for further reflection on the relationship between religion and politics simply.

After Euthyphro claims that he must leave, Socrates tells him that:

> By leaving, you are throwing me down from a great hope I had: that by learning from you the things pious and the things not, I would be released from Meletus' indictment. For I hoped to show him that I have now become wise in the divine things from Euthyphro, and that I am no longer acting unadvisedly because of ignorance or making innovations concerning them, and especially that I would live better for the rest of my life.

In light of these concluding statements, we must notice and therefore consider that the entire conversation with Euthyphro is bracketed by considerations of Socrates' own trial.

As noted above, the stated intention for this conversation is that Socrates desires to become Euthyphro's student in order to escape his indictment at the hands of Meletus. And while what we have seen of Euthyphro throughout the conversation makes this stated intention clearly ironic, its irony does not preclude there being something partially true about it. We have argued that it is far more likely that Socrates has undertaken this conversation for the sake of reforming Euthyphro. But this need not preclude the possibility of there being some truth to Socrates' stated intention to be gained by looking more closely at what it implies. Insofar as this discussion precedes Socrates' own trial and is the only alternative that Socrates presents as a means of dealing with his predicament (the private method of teaching and correcting), it has to be taken seriously. Thus, we must consider how this seemingly ironic alternative might be partially true, including how it might possibly free Socrates from his indictment. And, if upon such consideration, this alternative proves practically impossible, then we must consider whether Socrates' fate was unavoidable, and by extension how the tension between philosophy and the city may be itself irreconcilable

Firstly, if Socrates truly did desire to learn from Euthyphro, we must bear in mind it was only after he had described his own prosecution of his father that Socrates' interest was engaged. Socrates appears to be shocked, first because of the extreme nature of the prosecution and its departure from ordinary conceptions of

piety; and second, because Euthyphro claims to have wisdom about the divine things and how they are disposed towards the pious.[130] His choice of learning from Euthyphro, then, would be based on this combination: professed wisdom and commitment to a heterodox action. Insofar as the pious Euthyphro sees Socrates himself as 'pious' (Euthyphro associates Socrates' religious innovations with his daimonion, which he takes to be a clear sign of his 'religiousity'), he is a good choice for a teacher, for many other men are offended by Socrates, regarding him as suspicious, and believing him to be guilty of irreverence (thus they would be suspicious of Socrates' supposed desire to learn). So, not only does Euthyphro claim to have something to teach, but he is also *willing* to teach Socrates. In this sense he is not a strange choice for a teacher. However, when we consider Socrates' reason for wanting to become Euthyphro's student (that of learning the pious things and the divine things for the sake of freeing himself from Meletus' indictment), we see that Euthyphro would be a most bizarre choice. What would make Socrates think that the Athenians would forgive his wrong-doings as a consequence of having learned the pious things from a man who is prosecuting his own father to the dismay of his family and fellow citizens? Euthyphro himself is presenting a significant attack on the city's conception of piety, and on its most fundamental unit: the family.

A clue to this question may be provided in the actual wording of Socrates' stated intention. Although the conversation is ostensibly undertaken in order to learn 'the pious' and 'the impious', both here in Socrates' final comments about

[130] We learn from Socrates himself in *Apology* that he liked to examine people who were reputed to have wisdom. C.f., 21b10.

what he had sought to learn from Euthyphro, and in his initial comments about becoming Euthyphro's student, he speaks about wanting knowledge of the 'divine things' (5a3-b8; 15e6-16a5). Although he does mention 'the pious' in his concluding remarks, he says that he hoped he would be released from Meletus' indictment by learning the things pious and the things not, because he would have shown Meletus—not that he had learned the *pious* things—but that he had become wise in the *divine* things. In light of these statements, we must reflect on the fact that Socrates is not exactly being charged with 'impiety' but with 'making novel gods and not believing in the ancient [gods]'. In order to show that his innovations are not wrong, or to defend himself against the charge of making innovations, Socrates would have to show that he knows the divine things (either to show that he does believe in the gods of the city and so is not making innovations, or to show that his innovations are correct and that the ordinary view of the gods is incorrect).

But this is ridiculous. Socrates could never persuade the city of his conclusions concerning the gods. This impossibility leads us to the real reason why Socrates implies that he would have to learn the pious things from Euthyphro in order to escape his indictment, and in seeing this reason, we see why Euthyphro is not such an odd choice for a teacher, despite his heterodoxy. While Socrates is accused of being a wrong-doer as a consequence of his annoyance about the stories of the gods, Euthyphro is a *genuine believer* in the gods of the city. In fact, part of Socrates' role as student demands that he, who is ignorant about the gods, accept as given the stories that his 'teacher' believes to be true (5c4-8). Euthyphro's obvious departure from the city's standards of piety is less threatening than Socrates'

disbelief in the traditional accounts of the gods. Even if Socrates presents a pious veneer, for whatever reason, and even if Socrates defends the traditional notions of piety by thwarting Euthyphro's impious and unjust course of action (thereby preserving private families; 14b4-7), he is still more visible and more threatening than the dangerous Euthyphro simply because he doesn't *believe* (an element of piety that is never explicitly addressed, though it looms in the background of the entire discussion).

The private method of teaching and correcting endorsed by and exemplified by Socrates, the one that Socrates suggests both to Euthyphro, and later to Meletus in the course of his trial, is also exemplified by Euthyphro as teacher of Socrates. And just as this private method may be ineffective with a man like Euthyphro, so too, we see, it is ineffective with a man like Socrates (for different reasons). We see then, that this alternative is *impossible,* because Socrates simply cannot accept the traditional account of the gods. While this may seem to be an obvious point, it is significant in that it shows exactly what the tension between the philosopher and the city is, and exactly what would be required to eliminate that tension. Insofar as Socrates cannot successfully learn from Euthyphro, first because Euthyphro does not have the wisdom that he professes to have, and secondly because he believes in accounts of the gods that Socrates is somehow sure are false, we see that philosophy cannot be reconciled with the city. As long as piety is properly understood as a subset of justice, and as a consequence, piety is a civic concern, Socrates, who cannot be sincerely pious, cannot be 'just' in the eyes of his fellow citizens. His trial would appear to be unavoidable. What is left is the appearance of piety, but

although Socrates managed to appear pious to men like Euthyphro,[131] others suspected that his innovations concerning the gods actually masked a lack of belief in the gods[132]. A question inspired by the dialogue, then, is whether a city ought to ask for more than the appearance of piety?

We see, then, that contrary to what Socrates says at the beginning of the dialogue, it is not so much *that* he teaches that has aroused the anger of the Athenians, but *what* he teaches. That is, his accusers believe that he teaches others not to believe in the gods of the city—which Socrates effectively admits to Euthyphro (6a)—and they conclude from this, that Socrates is an atheist and teaches others to be atheists. And yet, despite the fact that Socrates cannot be pious in the sense of truly believing in the gods of the city, he nonetheless supports a taxonomy that makes piety a demand of justice. As we have seen, Socrates does not have to do this, as there are other plausible taxonomical models. He could have, for example, presented a taxonomy that separated the demands of justice from the demands of piety altogether, as our modern state has. Socrates, then, champions a model that is not necessary; thus, he must regard it as salutary, despite its apparently being at odds with his own way of life. Insofar as belief in the gods is an indication of one's piety, the only avenue open to Socrates in order to deal with the unavoidable tension between the city and non-believers is to *appear* pious.

But from what we have seen, Socrates has not been altogether successful at maintaining a pious veneer. Not only is he being prosecuted on charges that clearly imply impiety, but he confesses to Euthyphro that his reputation for being a wrong-

[131] A belief based on Socrates' relationship with the daimon.
[132] Consider Meletus' admission in *Apology*; 28a.

doer stems from his annoyance at the stories about the gods.[133] Perhaps we are to conclude that Socrates lacks the requisite shame that is a result of fear of bad reputation (12b9-c1), or more aptly, reputation for badness. On the other hand, he tacitly admonishes Euthyphro to have shame before his fellow humans, in addition to attempting to reform Euthyphro in order to defend the family and the traditional conception of piety. And furthermore, despite the fact that some men believe Socrates to be an atheist (e.g., Meletus), others—including Euthyphro—do not doubt his piety. The reason why Euthyphro is not suspicious of Socrates' piety, as is Meletus, is because Socrates apparently has communication from his daimonion. Now, Socrates' daimonion is a matter of significant interpretive dispute, and while a complete understanding of the daimonion would require a comprehensive look at all of its manifestations within the corpus, we are nonetheless invited by this dialogue to consider this mysterious force in Socrates' life (though we are by no means given the necessary resources to examine it thoroughly). We shall, therefore, limit our discussion of the daimonion to one simple point. If Socrates truly believes in his daimonion, it would appear that he is not guilty of impiety in the true sense of the charge. If, on the other hand, he does not believe in his daimonion, or in the kind of daimonion that Euthyphro assumes that he believes in, then Socrates may be attempting to appear pious to his fellow citizens, which may in turn be a manifestation of his justice. If the latter is the case, then the question becomes: ought a city to enforce more than the appearance of piety. That is, should a man be condemned to death for not *believing* in the gods of the city?

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[133] Perhaps all philosophic reformers and legislators are ill-received in their time.

Summary Remarks

At the close of the dialogue, we are ostensibly no closer to understanding the pious than we were at the beginning: the discussion ends at an impasse. The stated reason for undertaking the conversation—that Socrates learn from Euthyphro the things pious in addition to becoming wise in the divine things in order to show Meletus that he is no longer ignorant about both, hence no longer wrongly making innovations, and 'especially that he would live better'—goes unfulfilled. That is, not only is the inquiry unsuccessful philosophically, the political and practical importance of the question is no less immediate (for Socrates still must defend himself at trial). The question of Socrates' alleged impiety or irreverence, accordingly, remains a pressing practical concern that cannot be fully judged lacking an adequate standard of piety whereby to judge him. The two men fail to discover that 'pattern' which would allow for a valid assessment of each particular pious and impious thing (6e4-7).

When we step back from the dialogue, we see that this predicament, insofar as piety is a dictate of justice, is a persistent one. But precisely because the question of piety is bound so intimately to the question of justice, we also see that despite the fact that knowledge of the divine things is difficult—even *the most* difficult kind of knowledge—a city must be able to make provisional judgments (that appear to be, and so are accepted as, final judgments) on the things pious for the sake of political coherence and stability. And although particular men, like Socrates, may have the luxury (and ability) of suspending belief about particular

conceptions of the gods in favor of a kind of open-mindedness that attends self-conscious ignorance, a city can afford no such luxury. The city's need to cultivate piety precludes an open-ended investigation into divine matters, primarily because codes of behavior that constitute what is pious buttress the laws and tradition. The pious, then, is not necessarily directly connected to the *truly* divine in the sense that the gods love the pious (which presumes that genuine *divinities* love at all), though this may be a salutary understanding of the gods (contrast 4e3-4 and 4e5-6). Such a conception of the relationship between the divine and the pious promotes justice, insofar as the gods are perceived to be the cosmic support of justice, and therefore being just is a dictate of piety.

This political need to dictate the practical demands of piety is emphasized by the fact that from the very beginning of the dialogue, the question of piety arises out of a consideration of two trials; the language of the interlocutors is rooted in legal terminology, and the setting of the discussion is the public law court. Accordingly, this consideration of piety would appear to be inspired by and rooted in political concerns. Not incidentally, we learn from the dialogue that concerns of piety can be understood in such a way as to be subordinate to the greater or more comprehensive concern for justice—though the dialogue also shows that this is *not* the only way the relationship can be understood. But despite the numerous times that justice is raised as a question or a factor in the two men's conversation, it is never explicitly considered as a form. In fact, Socrates seems intentionally to end the conversation in such a way that the status of justice is left open, not to say controversial (even the gods dispute over the just). It would seem, therefore, that

in order to understand anything definitive about the pious, we may first need to know more about justice, which means that this dialogue is incapable of uncovering the complete truth about the pious.

No sooner do we say this, however, than we are immediately confronted by the possibility that piety, as a subset of justice, and in particular political justice, may be a strictly political phenomenon. Were we to concede this point, we would have to say that man's disposition towards the gods and his longing to please the gods came into being with the first political formulation of justice, a suggestion that does not strike us as altogether sound.[134] Piety and the longing for a relationship with the divine is a pervasive psychological phenomena that cannot fully be understood by investigating particular politicized religions. Socrates' interest in Euthyphro, if it is indeed genuine, would seem to imply that one can learn different things about piety from different kinds of men. And yet, in the final analysis, it seems more likely that this discussion of piety, being anchored in practical political concerns, is intended to indicate the proper relationship between politics and religion such that the polity gives shape to man's disposition towards the gods by formulating a particular conception of the pious, one that supports both its laws and its mores—though, to repeat, this is not all that is being suggested about piety in the dialogue.

We can see this more clearly if we consider the religious psychology as exemplified by the character of Euthyphro. Despite the fact that his definitions proceed from more extreme notions of piety to more common ones, all of his definitions share the same root; each is based on the same assumption that the gods

[134] After all, religion is found in the most primitive social aggregates of men.

favor the pious. Because Euthyphro understands from his own experience that he is capable of causal agency, he concludes that the gods too, being conceived of anthropomorphically, must be capable of acting as causes. The very grammar that Socrates uses in the section dealing with whether the pious is pious because it is loved, or loved because it is pious supports this assumption. For when a thing is led, it is led *because* something is doing the leading.[135] Neither of the two men considers the example that Socrates mentions later, that the lover who follows the beloved may in fact be led by something within himself (i.e., his erotic longing) rather than being causally led by the beloved (in the manner that a man might lead a horse by its bridle or a bull by the ring in its nose). Because of this common 'trick' of grammar, and because of this tendency of men to abstract from their own experience and to understand things anthropomorphically, we see the ease with which one might (naturally) conclude that it is the gods that are leading men, meting out both good and bad in accordance with their will.[136] Again, we are confronted with a similar question as that which pertains to love: are the true causes of piety external and active upon us, or rather internal to us, namely, hope and fear?

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[135] We should note that some (e.g., Heidegger) have attempted to make the case that belief in Being, as something that *exists* and therefore acts as a cause, is equally presumptuous and, in fact, erroneous. While this criticism may seem unrelated, we see that it is relevant to this dialogue because when speaking of things led, carried and seen, Socrates also mentions that which is coming into being, pointing directly to this issue. And while we do not pretend to understand this issue in its entirety, this may serve to bring the question of piety to bear more directly on philosophy.

[136] And if, as the conversation concerning awe and dread would seem to suggest, dread causes awe, then our dread of bad things would seem to lead to our awe for the gods. We might also consider a 'quasi-Hobbesian' or conventionalist interpretation of the phenomena dread and awe in this context. Dread (in this dialogue, linked to justice), might actually be the cause of political justice. We feel ourselves to be free, but somehow limited, largely because our fear of being abused by others leads to our willingness to limit our own freedoms. Once political justice is established, those limitations become the source of awe—we recognize that we are not completely free. Justice, in this sense, might easily lead to piety, to the belief that we are limited by some external force and must follow a code of behavior that pleases that outside force.

The very fact that men assume that the gods *cause* bad things to happen would seem to be the result of yet another assumption, bound up with the way that we understand the world: that there are clear, and definite opposites in the world—for example, that the pious and the impious are diametrically 'opposed'. This assumption is never endorsed by Socrates; he progressively reformulates Euthyphro's definitions, first introducing the middle ground of neither pious nor impious, and (second) dropping the impious altogether (compare 5c4-d6 and 15e1-2; 10). He further emphasizes the difference between his and Euthyphro's view by claiming that the gods are the cause of all good things, saying nothing about whether or not they also cause bad things. For Socrates to correct all of Euthyphro's assumptions, he would have to, in effect, re-conceptualize the gods[137] —a task that he here rejects in saying that he must concede to Euthyphro's wisdom about the gods because of his own ignorance (6ab1-4). Such a task would be virtually impossible, in any case, as we see when we consider a fuller account of Euthyphro's psychology.

It is not simply that Euthyphro has made certain logical errors in his account of the gods; indeed he is not looking for the actual truth about the gods at all. His conception of the gods, which he shares with the city, answers to certain longings and desires latent in his soul. Not only does he believe that the gods favor the pious (as, for example, they favor the just, the noble, and the good), but he believes that if he is pious, he will be personally favored and thereby rewarded with good things. This desire exemplifies the idea of spiritual commerce that Socrates introduces

[137] A task he proves himself to be capable of beginning in Book II of *Republic*. Of course, there, his audience was altogether different (consisting of young atheists).

towards the end of the dialogue. But there is more to his 'piety' than a desire for reward: man's longing for order, bounded horizons, and the cosmic support of justice, are constituents of Euthyphro's psyche, as they are of most people's. The idea that there are things beyond man's total control, and especially, even beyond the control of a god, is profoundly unsettling, and (Socrates implies) is the source of dread that prevents rigorous investigation into divine and sacred matters. Consequently, unquestioned piety may in some cases be a substitute for genuine courage and wisdom (15c10-d1; though it can contribute to political courage, as suggested in *Republic*), and it functions as a clear means of securing the favor of the gods who are believed, not only capable of countering the winds of fortune, but as willing to do so if properly 'tended'.

Piety in this sense may be genuinely helpful to a polity, since it functions to comfort men and to provide them with guidance for leading wholesome lives. It effectively wards off the nihilistic effects of living in an 'open horizon', of anxiety from awareness of being subject to the vicissitudes of things, and supplies a substantial moral code and 'cosmology'. [138] Piety would also appear to deepen the soul by encouraging a self-conscious seriousness about the soul.

At least this much can be said in favor of encouraging piety. However, because the longing to please the gods can become so strong in some people,

[138] This would shed new light on Socrates' 'animal-tending' examples. Perhaps, according to this interpretation, man ought to 'alter' the nature of the genuine divinities in accordance with what will benefit him. Socrates' annoyance at the stories about the gods, accordingly, would be evidence of his justice (to which piety would belong as a subset), as well as evidence of his role as philosophic reformer. This, of course, raises the rather substantial issue of whether Socrates was in fact guilty of impiety, and indeed whether or not a city ought to enforce laws against impiety. And in particular, whether it ought to enforce actual belief in gods, as opposed to the appearance of piety. The fact that 'shame' before citizens, and 'fear of bad reputation' are rather consistent themes in this dialogue, we are invited to consider whether such fear and shame, if they support the appearance of piety, are sufficient. That is, must one also have fear for and awe before gods?

whether out of fear of God's/the gods' wrath or desire for his/their favor, the concern for piety can swamp all other concerns. Moreover, those who come to understand themselves as having a special relationship with god, even as his agents for doing his work on earth, can easily become a positive menace. This is in fact what has happened with Euthyphro. In his desire to distinguish himself before the gods, to do what they do and to serve their cause amongst men, he has lost sight of 'natural justice'—not to say common-sense with respect to conventional justice—indeed to such an extent that he is prosecuting his father for the 'murder' of a murderer. We might also suggest that Euthyphro's prosecution is also bound up with his desire to distinguish himself amongst men. He manages to believe in his own superiority, despite being laughed at, and despite the fact that he is not taken seriously as an expert on things divine (even or perhaps especially by his own father, who instead calls on an exegete to judge what should be done with the murderer of his slave). Euthyphro does not even question whether his father has actually done an injustice, so great is his faith in himself as a knower of the mind(s) of the god(s), and perhaps so great is his desire to prove it.

Plato may, through the character of Euthyphro, be pointing to a larger problem with religion. If, as we have argued, Euthyphro's first view of piety (it is pious to enforce punitive justice) is intimately connected to his second, more commonplace definition of piety (the art of prayer and sacrifice), it would seem that Euthyphro, as a type, is a constant possibility implicitly suggested by the taxonomical model put forth by Socrates. That is, if a city legally enforces piety as a subset of justice, the possibility that the relationship between the two will reverse

itself, such that piety overpowers justice and brings it under its own purview, will be a persistent possibility. Types like Euthyphro may be a recurring symptom of this potential subversion of politics by religion. In this dialogue, we see Socrates attempting to reform Euthyphro's understanding of that relationship, and he appears to succeed, as Euthyphro agrees that piety is 'tendance of the gods' and belongs to the larger class of justice. However, Socrates does not leave Euthyphro with the more commonplace view of piety, but shakes his confidence about his own wisdom to the extent that he is not even sure about traditional views of piety (sacrifice and prayer). If Socrates does this because the two views of piety share the same root (what is dear to the gods is pious—thus Euthyphro may be inclined to return to his original view), then it would seem to be the case that shaking Euthyphro's confidence in the traditional view of piety is a lesser evil than allowing him to hang on to that view, lest he return to his original view of piety as comprehensive.

From the particular example of Euthyphro, we are invited to abstract to the larger political question about the proper relationship between piety and justice. That is, we are invited to consider whether in some instances the complete separation of justice and piety is the more desirable arrangement. For example, if notions of piety, such as Euthyphro's original view, turn against the city and overpower the greater and more comprehensive demands of justice, it may be better to undermine that conception of piety than to allow it to reign over concerns of justice. The taxonomical issues raised by the dialogue would seem to point to this very question: what is the proper relationship between piety and justice simply, and in particular situations. This question pertains to the very large issue of whether our

modern regime, which separates church and state, is the best model for right now, and furthermore, if it is the best model simply.

Of course, this is not the necessary conclusion of the dialogue. After all, the question of punishment permeates the conversation as a sub-theme. It may be that the drama is not necessarily advocating the undermining of Euthyphro's religious views, but rather is pointing to the fact that some men are impervious to Socrates' method: that of private education, and therefore we are invited to consider the alternatives. For example, are we to understand that punishment is the only means of dealing with the 'dense' Euthyphro such as to bring him in line with the best interest of the city?

But despite the fact that Socrates' stated taxonomy—that piety is properly placed under the purview of justice—is of rather significant political importance, the discussion that the two men have concerning piety also has a wider significance. That is, although the conversation points to the salutary *effects* of piety (while also warning of the dangers) the discussion also aims at discovering *what* in fact piety is. And since Socrates may be suggesting that piety not only encourages seriousness about political justice, but also seriousness about the philosophic investigation of justice (because the gods are said to love justice, and so one must seek to know what justice is), are we to understand piety as a virtue? Can we speak of piety as a virtue if it is simply incidental to loving what the gods love? (e.g., justice)

This question leads us back into the heart of the dialogue, and, perhaps not incidentally, to the question that readers remember most: is the pious loved because it is pious or pious because it is loved? Since every attempt at defining 'the pious'

circles back to the same definition (what is dear to the gods), we must presume the central importance of this section of the dialogue. Accordingly, *the* question about piety is whether or not piety as a (possibly) distinct virtue can be separated from its presumptions about what is dear to the gods (or from the gods simply). As we have seen, if the pious is pious because it is loved by gods, then man is radically dependent upon communication from the gods in order to determine the content of the pious, and by extension, what man must do to please them. Because the gods may, in principle, love something for no reason discernible to man, the man who would be pious must seek revelation as frequently as possible. He must do so because he cannot be sure that anything prevents the gods from changing their loves; what was once the pious thing (e.g., what traditional stories claim to be pious) may no longer be so in the future, or even from day to day. [139]

On the other hand, if the pious is loved because it is pious, and if the pious can be known by unaided human reason, then the gods would appear to be subject to an intelligible necessity. But what could possibly be the nature of the pious such that it had some distinctive 'character' *independent* of its relation to divinities? On this model, does it make sense to speak of piety at all?

These two alternatives, which Socrates speaks of as being opposites (11a5-6), would appear to be the result of two differing approaches to the question of the pious. We can see this more clearly with the help of yet another taxonomy, present in the dialogue, but strangely, never explicitly discussed: the divine, the sacred, the

[139] The subtleties of the question of Revelation are beyond the scope of this paper. Quite obviously the *kind* of gods that are revealing their will to men will have a great effect on the character of their demands from men. For example, it is a matter of great dispute in all of the great monotheistic religions whether and to what extent God demands that man rely upon his reason.

pious, and the reverent. For example, we learn only that sacred things are stolen (5d10), and that they are adorned by painters and presented to gods during religious ceremonies (6c1-3). More generally, we know that the 'sacred' was distinct from the 'pious' in that it referred to what was reserved for gods, as opposed to what was prescribed for men. We also learn from the dialogue that the reverent is distinct from the pious, perhaps constituting a subset of piety (12e2-7), and that it too pertains to 'tending the gods' (13b3). Depending upon how one approaches these classes or 'categories' in regard to their proper hierarchical order, one will answer Socrates' crucial question in different ways. If one begins with the divine things as the first cause, and consequently, the cause of the pious (and everything else), then the pious is pious because it is loved. However, if one approaches these classes from the 'bottom', beginning with the reverent, ascending via piety to the first things, or the divine things, then one does not necessarily posit the divine things as the *cause* of the pious. These two differences in approach are exemplified by Euthyphro's statement that he knows 'how the divine is disposed concerning the pious and the impious' (4e3-4), and Socrates' reformulation of Euthyphro's claim to wisdom as 'knowledge about how the divine things are disposed, *and* the pious and impious things' (4e6-7; my emphasis). In Socrates' formulation, the first things are not pre-supposed from the beginning, and in particular the first things are not pre-supposed such as to be the cause of the pious, and consequently, are not presumed to love, or to be susceptible to the wishes and needs of men.

Part of the implication of Socrates' question (of whether the pious is pious because loved or loved because pious) is the rather significant difference between

the 'methodology' of the *homo religiosus* and the *homo philosophicus*. The former begins with god as first cause, and attempts to see how everything follows from that fundamental fact; whereas the latter, the philosopher (such as Socrates), begins with the world as it presents itself, ascending through taxonomical distinctions up to an understanding of the whole. [140]

This method is of particular importance for understanding Socrates' final words to Euthyphro: he claims that had he genuinely learned from Euthyphro the things pious and the things not, and had he become wise in the divine things, he would have learned how to live better for the rest of his life. While initially this statement strikes us as altogether ridiculous, and surely ironic, its irony does not preclude its being true in some sense. In order to see this properly, we must take seriously the fact that Socrates says that he has always considered it important to know the divine things (5a6-7), and yet is willing to admit his ignorance about them

[140] Strauss has some interesting things to say about this matter, and so are worth quoting at length—indeed so fitting for the current investigation, one would almost imagine that he had *Euthyphro* in mind when he wrote them: 'Contrary to appearances, Socrates' turn to the study of human things was based, not upon disregard of the divine or the natural things, but upon a new approach to the understanding of all things. That approach was indeed of such a character that it permitted, and favored, the study of human things as such, i.e., of the human things insofar as they are not reducible to the divine or natural things. Socrates deviated from his predecessors by identifying the science of the whole, or of everything that is, with the understanding of 'what each of the particular beings is'....For 'to be' means 'to be something' and hence to be different from things which are 'something else'; 'to be' means therefore 'to be a part'. Hence the whole cannot 'be' in the same sense in which everything that is 'something' 'is'; the whole must be 'beyond being'. And yet the whole is the totality of its parts. To understand the whole then means to understand all the parts of the whole or the articulation of the whole. *If* 'to be' is 'to be something', the being of a thing, or the nature of a thing, is primarily its What, its 'shape' or 'form' or 'character', as distinguished in particular from that out of which it has come into being. The thing itself, the completed thing, cannot be understood as a product of a process leading up to it, but on the contrary, the process cannot be understood except in light of the completed thing or the end of the process. The What is, as such, the character of a class of things or of a 'tribe' of things—of things which by nature belong together or form a natural group. The whole has a natural articulation. To understand the whole, therefore, means no longer primarily to discover the roots out of which the completed whole, the articulated whole, the whole consisting of distinct groups of things, the intelligible whole, the cosmos, has grown, *or to discover the cause which has transformed the chaos into a cosmos*, or to perceive the unity which is hidden behind the variety of things or appearances, but to understand the unity that is revealed in the manifest articulation of the completed whole. (my emphasis; Strauss, Leo, "Classical Natural Right' in *Natural Right and History*, 122-23)

(6b3-4). Now, the definition of the pious that relies solely on revelation (that the pious is pious because it is loved), is apparently refuted by Socrates, but it is refuted by virtue of the fact that Euthyphro wants to subject the gods' will to an outside standard of intelligible necessity, namely justice (that the god loves justice and so enforcing punitive justice is pious). If we abandon this desire, then we are left with Revelation in its pure form, and in its pure form, Revelation simply cannot be refuted by reason. The life dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom and the life lived according to (supposed) revelation stand opposed to each other, and each is incapable of refuting the other (as hundreds of years of scholarship would seem to attest to). And yet, Socrates appears to reject revelation out of hand, as his closing comments imply. How are we to understand this apparent rejection in light of the inconclusiveness of the evidence? Would this unfounded rejection not stand opposed to the open-mindedness essential to the life of philosophy?

Because the choice of life—that of Reason or Revelation—is a matter of utmost importance, as it would seem that one's soul hangs in the balance, Socrates' openness to both lives (as indicated by his ironic, and therefore partially genuine, willingness to learn from Euthyphro), and because of his realization of his ignorance about the gods, he has only one choice. In order to decide the question of the best life, one has to have knowledge of divine things, which—barring the experience of having had personal communication from the gods (perhaps *even* if one had such an experience)—would require a complete metaphysics. Socrates' continued *theoretical* openness, then, manifests itself as a *practical* rejection of the life of revelation. His attempt to ascend through a taxonomical analysis of the

things 'that are' with the goal of achieving an understanding of the whole precludes choosing the life of revelation, though it does not refute that possibility.

This very fact may provide even more insight into why Socrates questions Euthyphro on the pious rather than the divine. And he does so despite the fact that Euthyphro claims, in particular, to have knowledge of how the divine things are disposed towards the pious. One would expect that knowledge of how the divine things are disposed would require knowledge of the divine simply, but Socrates separates these two things out, re-stating the character of Euthyphro's wisdom as knowledge of how the divine things are disposed and the pious and impious things (4e3-7), asking only about the latter. And he does this contrary to what Euthyphro would prefer, or at least find more natural: to tell Socrates 'even more wondrous [things about the gods] than these [traditional stories about the gods]' (6b6-7; also 6c5-8). Most importantly, Socrates does this despite the fact that his real (self-professed) interest is in the things divine. As we have already noted, his approach would appear to be a consequence of his attempt to gain knowledge of the whole, rather than to assume the first cause. But, here, at the end of our commentary, we also see that the question of the pious is prior in that one must understand why it is a question if one is even to pursue philosophy. While modern academic tastes tend towards suspicion with regard to the pious, an outright rejection of the question of 'the pious' may, in some sense, be a rejection of that openness which belongs properly to the philosophic disposition. At least equally as important is that this rejection may further constitute a dismissal of crucial insights into the human moral psychology that may influence *homo religiosus* and *homo philosophicus* alike.

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